

British embassy urges Iran to help release hostages

BEIRUT (AP) — The British embassy urged Iran to help release Western hostages held in Lebanon Wednesday — the day British journalist John McCarthy began a sixth year in captivity. "We urge Iran to exercise its humanitarian influence as soon as possible to secure the release of the hostages in Lebanon," an embassy statement said. "This release will be a big step forward and will open a new page in our relations with Iran," said the statement, issued to mark the fifth anniversary of McCarthy's abduction on the road to Beirut airport. McCarthy, 34, has not been heard from since but other hostages released last year said he was in good health. Most of the 11 Westerners missing in Lebanon are believed held in groups influenced by Iran.

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Husseini: U.S. has not ruled out PLO

BAHRAN (AP) — Palestinian nationalist leader Faisal Al Husseini was quoted Wednesday as saying that the United States has not ruled out PLO participation in a joint delegation with Jordan or the Arabs in the proposed Middle East peace conference. Mr. Husseini, who led the Palestinian team that held talks with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker on March 12 and April 19, made the statement to the London-based newsletter *Middle East Mirror*. He made the statements as Mr. Baker set out on his third Middle East mission since the end of the Gulf war. The newsletter quoted Mr. Husseini as saying that "PLO spokesman seemed to be acceptable to Washington if the Palestinian team was part of a joint delegation with Jordan or a single pan-Arab delegation." He said at their last meeting Mr. Baker proposed the two formulas along with a third — an independent Palestinian delegation made up exclusively of leaders from the occupied territories. He said Mr. Baker also "hinted" at the possibility of holding two conferences — one Palestinian-Israeli and another Arab-Israeli.

Dumas to Libya, Egypt next week

PARIS (R) — French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas will visit Libya and Egypt on April 22-23 for talks on bilateral affairs and the Middle East situation in general, his office said Wednesday. Mr. Dumas' trip was to start with visits to Algeria and Tunisia, crucial diplomatic partners for Paris, but those stopovers were postponed without explanation until a future, unspecified date. French newspapers said Mr. Dumas had planned to meet Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat in Tunis despite the PLO chief's being ostracised by most Western states for supporting Iraq in the Gulf war. France is a main backer of the PLO among Western nations.

Yeltsin: Russia could open ties with Israel

PARIS (R) — Russian leader Boris Yeltsin said Wednesday the Soviet Union should resume diplomatic relations with Israel and Russia could open ties on its own if the Kremlin failed to do so. Mr. Yeltsin, president of the Russian Federation parliament, said it was abnormal for the Soviet Union not to have relations with Israel. "The time has come for diplomatic relations," he said in a news conference during a visit to France. "Russia is prepared either to associate itself (with the resumption of ties) or to establish diplomatic relations independently," he said.

Khamenei goes on pilgrimage

NICOSIA (R) — Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei went on a pilgrimage to a Shiite Muslim shrine in Mashhad in northeast Iran Wednesday, a day after he was reported recovering from minor illness. Tehran Radio said Ayatollah Khamenei would visit the shrine of Imam Reza, the eighth imam of the Shiites, and address a gathering of people in Mashhad, his hometown. He skipped a mass prayer in Tehran marking 'Eid Al Fitr. President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said the black-turbaned leader had stayed home on doctors' advice following an "indisposition" on Monday night. He gave no details.

Member of Kuwait ruling family remained in custody

CAIRO (R) — An Egyptian magistrate remanded a member of Kuwait's ruling family in custody on Wednesday pending investigation into possible drug trafficking, judicial sources said. Sheikh Talal Nasser Al Sabah, a second cousin to the emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, was ordered held for 45 days to allow police to probe whether heroin he brought into Egypt was for personal use or for sale. On Sunday, Sheikh Talal, 33, admitted he smuggled about one kilogramme of heroin into Egypt but denied he planned to sell it. He has not yet been charged.

Kuwaiti smoke sends darkness to Iran

NICOSIA (AP) — Several cities in the western province of Bakhtaran went totally dark at noon Wednesday due to smoke clouds from ignited Kuwaiti oil wells, the Islamic Republic news agency reported. For two hours street and house lights were turned on and automobiles used their headlights to navigate city streets, said IRNA. The town of Iiam also experienced black rain for 30 minutes, the report said. The province is well over 500 kilometres north of Kuwait. Over 500 wells in Kuwait were set ablaze in the Gulf war. Firefighters are only now beginning to cap the wells.

Guerrilla rockets kill 3 in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (R) — Mujahideen guerrillas killed three people, including two children, when they fired rockets at two Afghan cities, the Baktar news agency reported on Wednesday.

Iraq rejects allied plan to set up camps, but U.S. moves in

Combined agency dispatches

THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT denounced Wednesday a U.S.-sponsored plan for American, British and French troops to set up and guard relief camps for refugees inside northern Iraq as unwarranted meddling in its affairs.

Foreign Minister Ahmad Husein Khudayer said the unprecedented operation announced by U.S. President George Bush would hamper efforts to resolve the refugee crisis with a United Nations team.

"Such an attitude is a continuation of the policy of intervention in Iraq's internal affairs. Such an attitude is not necessary even in practical terms," he said in a statement to the Iraqi News Agency (INA).

The Defence Department announced later Wednesday that U.S. forces had entered northern Iraq to start up the refugee relief camps President Bush called for Tuesday.

"Starting today ground teams have begun to enter northern Iraq to survey sites, looking for those locations which are most suitable to these refugee centers," Pentagon spokesman Pete Williams said at a news briefing.

"You're looking at about two weeks before the camps would be pretty well ready to go," Mr.

Williams said, noting that construction and organisation of the half-dozen or so camps remained after sites had been picked out.

Although Mr. Williams said he could not say exactly how many U.S. troops would eventually be detailed to run the camps and guard them, officials told Reuters earlier between 5,000 and 10,000 American soldiers would go into Iraq for that purpose.

Iraqi Prime Minister Saadoun Hammadi said eight days ago that Iraq would resist "with all means" any plan by the West to set up refugee camps within its borders.

"Up to two million people fled from their homes to the rugged Iranian and Turkish frontiers following the crushing more than two weeks ago of parallel Shiite and Kurdish rebellions in Iraq following the Gulf war.

Mr. Khudayer said Iraq and the U.N. had reached agreement in principle on how to resolve the crisis.

He said Baghdad was cooperating with Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, the veteran U.N. troubleshooter who is in overall charge of the world body's relief efforts around Iraq and Kuwait.

U.N. officials said the agreement with Baghdad allowed for creation of "humanitarian centers" in northern and southern Iraq operated by civilian U.N.

personnel.

"There is to be an extensive U.N. presence in the north and in the south, including among the Shiites," one official said.

Around 100 civilian U.N. personnel would run the centres.

Mr. Bush's announcement in Washington on Tuesday night took members of the U.N. fact-finding team by surprise. "He is on a collision course with the U.N.," one source close to the delegation said. "This could complicate matters."

INA said later that Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz, the former foreign minister, met Prince Sadruddin on Wednesday but gave no details.

Mr. Bush said the allied troops would set up half a dozen zones in northern Iraq to help hundreds of thousands of Kurds stranded for weeks in primitive mountain refuges. The camps would be turned over to the U.N. as soon as possible, he said.

"Adequate security will be provided at the temporary sites by U.S., British and French air and ground forces," Mr. Bush said, stressing that the operation did not amount to military intervention in Iraq's affairs.

Eric Suy, Belgian head of the U.N. team who visited towns in north Iraq Tuesday, said the allied plan was "absolutely a new element in the light of which we

will have to reconsider our position."

Some Kurds in Turkey said Wednesday they would never return to Iraq despite the allied move to send thousands of troops to northern Iraq.

U.N. spokeswoman Nadia Younes said an announcement was imminent concerning the establishment of the centres for the refugees.

Ms. Younes quoted Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar as saying in Paris the solution involved "the creation of reception centres for the Kurds and the Shiites, more or less everywhere on the territory."

"The Iraqi authorities are interested in this U.N. action," she quoted him as saying.

The creation of the centres would help solve the problems of the Kurds in the northern mountains, and the Shiites and Kurds who have headed south and east towards Iran.

Western diplomats said Wednesday that Iraq will have to allow relief supplies to reach Kurdish refugees before the Security Council lets Baghdad sell almost \$1 billion in oil.

Iraqi Ambassador Abdul Amir Al Anbari said his government wants to sell \$942.5 million of oil over four months "to buy things

(Continued on page 3)

Baker to discuss EC role in Mideast peace conference

LUXEMBOURG (Agencies) — President Saddam Hussein has offered a Kurdish rebel leader autonomy for his people and representation in parliament, according to a British politician just back from northern Iraq.

Ann Clwyd, foreign affairs spokeswoman for the opposition Labour Party, said the Kurds had greeted the offer with scepticism and that she advised them to be cautious.

Ms. Clwyd said she spoke by telephone to Kurdish rebel leader Jalal Talabani on Wednesday. He told her he had received the offer from President Saddam Tuesday.

"He offered autonomy for the Kurds within Iraq. He offered safety to them, he offered also seats in the national parliament and he talked about pluralism and democracy in Iraq," she told Britain's Independent Television News.

"Also, (President Saddam) said that he was prepared to state that his policies in the past towards the Kurds have been wrong."

Ms. Clwyd, who visited Mr. Talabani at his headquarters near Sulaimaniyah in northern Iraq last week, said the Kurds were sceptical of the offer.

"I told them that unless they had international guarantees that these promises of Saddam Hussein would be adhered to, then they would be very stupid indeed to accept," she said.

"They're asking, by tomorrow, they need to know what the international community thinks."

regional conference idea as a way to bring Arabs and Israelis into direct talks.

But many details are still unresolved, including sponsors, timing, agenda and who would represent the Palestinians.

U.S. officials say Mr. Baker is concerned that attitudes in the region may be hardening against his plans, especially in Israel where new settlements are springing up in the occupied West Bank despite U.S. requests to stop them as a sign of commitment to peace.

This is why he decided to return so quickly after ending his last mission last Friday night.

"Everybody knows what the questions (concerning movement on the peace process) are and they don't need six weeks to think what their answers should be," said a senior U.S. official.

Mr. Baker's plans to stop in Jordan followed a meeting in Geneva last week with Jordanian foreign minister, Taher Al Masri.

Besides Israel and Jordan, which Mr. Baker will visit for the first time, the secretary will talk in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria.

and the Arabs to decide outstanding questions, including who would represent Palestinians in peace talks.

U.S. officials say Mr. Baker is concerned that attitudes in the region may be hardening against his plans, especially in Israel where new settlements are springing up in the occupied West Bank despite U.S. requests to stop them as a sign of commitment to peace.

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Iraq asks U.N. to allow huge oil sale to buy wheat and meat

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Iraq has asked the U.N. Security Council for permission to sell nearly a billion dollars worth of oil on the world market to buy food and other emergency items.

A letter asking the council's sanctions committee to ease its trade embargo said Iraq wanted to raise \$942.5 million over the next four months to buy essential goods.

If the trade embargo imposed last August were in effect over a 12 month period, Iraq would need \$2.8 billion for basic food imports, according to the letter released Tuesday.

The letter from Iraq's U.N. ambassador, Abdul Amir Al

Anbari, was sent to Austrian Ambassador Peter Hohenfellner, chairman of the committee overseeing the sanctions imposed on Aug. 6.

A U.N. mission visiting Iraq last month said the country had been bombed back to the pre-industrial age during the Gulf war and needed large quantities of staple food, fuel and other emergency items to avert starvation and disease.

Among the items listed as needed over the four month period were 1.24 million tonnes of wheat, 240,000 tonnes of rice, the same amount of sugar, 80,000 tonnes of cooking oil, 40,000

tonnes of red meat as well as tea, milk, cheese, chicken, eggs, table salt, coffee and starch.

Also needed were 40,000 tonnes of washing powder, 20,000 tonnes of soap plus razor blades and various types of batteries.

"The situation with regard to food and basic humanitarian needs in Iraq is currently critical and exceeds the resources available to the Iraqi government and to international humanitarian organisations," Anbari said.

Diplomats told Reuters the request would be viewed in the light of how Iraq responded to international relief efforts to help Kurdish refugees in the north.

"It's an obvious pressure

point," said one envoy.

Under a harsh Security Council resolution adopted on April 3, all Iraqi exports are prohibited until its weapons of mass destruction are scrapped and the council has created a mechanism for war reparations, which includes tapping an undisclosed percentage of Iraq's oil revenues.

One exception to the ban is that if Iraq needs funds to buy food and other civilian essentials.

All imports except for essential supplies are barred until the council decides otherwise.

Iraq has been dependent on its own limited food stocks and relief supplies since the trade embargo was imposed.

U.S. unions launch nationwide freight rail strike

WASHINGTON (R) — Unions representing up to 250,000 workers began to shut down U.S. freight railroads Wednesday in a strike government officials said could jeopardise economic recovery prospects.

Carmakers said the strike, the first nationwide rail stoppage since 1982, would lead them to start laying off workers in one or two days. Other industries started cutting shipments in anticipation of the shutdown.

The strike began at 7 a.m. (1100 GMT) on the east coast, and was due to begin at 7 a.m. local time across the rest of the United States, a union official said.

"It doesn't make it a national stoppage yet, but give it three hours," said the official, who asked not to be named.

More than one-third of U.S. freight moves by train. Industry executives said any prolonged strike would begin quickly to harm the U.S. economy, the world's largest.

The Association of American Railroads, which represents major freight lines, said all key carriers on the Atlantic coast were being picketed.

Richard Briggs, an association spokesman, said pickets also were starting to appear around Chicago and further west.

Larry McFarther, president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, one of the striking unions, said in a television interview that workers were ready to shut down freight lines for as long as necessary to back their pay and working condition demands.

Union leaders said it was clear that the railroads were expecting Congress to enact into law the recommendations made by a presidential emergency board in January.

Talks broke down Tuesday night between the unions and carriers over pay and work conditions. Transportation Secretary Samuel Skinner said Tuesday that a strike could seriously jeopardise economic recovery prospects.

New Qatari budget projects 8.4% increase in revenue

MANAMA, Bahrain (AP) — Qatar has unveiled its budget for the 12-month period starting April 1, projecting only an increase in anticipated revenue of 8.4 per cent.

The oil-exporting nation cut expenditures by 0.3 per cent and hoped to shrink its budget deficit by \$46 million, or \$126 million, according to Qatari emir decree.

The decree, distributed by the Qatar News Agency monitored in Bahrain, set revenue for fiscal 1991-92 at 8.4 billion riyals (\$2.3 billion) compared to 7.8 billion riyals (\$2.16 billion) in the preceding year.

Expenditure was set at 11.705 billion riyals (\$3.25 billion) as compared to last year's expenditure.

The decree setting the new

fiscal budget did not say how much of the targeted revenue and expenditure was effectively achieved in the last fiscal year.

Even though Qatar has a small OPEC quota of 399,000 barrels per day, oil revenues still constitute the lion's share of income for the state which has a population of some 350,000.

Qatar's gas field is one of the largest in the world. First stage development of the field, at a cost of \$1.2 billion, was to have been completed in January but was delayed because of the Gulf war.

The project is designed to supply around 800 million cubic feet of gas a day to local industries and power stations. Around 40,000 barrels a day of gas liquids will be exported.

Mongolia's economic crisis worsens

ULAN BATÖR, Mongolia (R) — Mongolia's economic crisis is worsening, with severe shortages of goods and poor economic results threatening the future of the country, the government said.

"The fall is sharper than expected," said Prime Minister Dashin Byambasuren in a report to parliament. "The destiny of the country is being decided now."

In the report, broadcast on television, the prime minister said industry must be strictly inspected and reformed to halt the decline.

In the first quarter of the year, more than half of industrial enterprises showed a drop in production.

The average fall was between 20 and 30 per cent compared with 1990, but reached as high as 75 per cent in some cases.

No further details were available.

Economic chaos in the Soviet Union, Mongolia's huge neighbour to the north, has sent shocks through Mongolia's system, which had relied on Soviet raw materials, spare parts and energy.

Foreign trade has fallen dramati-

cally in the first quarter, by up to 60 per cent compared with last year, the report said.

The prime minister said that almost every part of the economy was touched by the poor results.

Ordinary consumers, hit by rationing of rice and sugar and facing shortages of electricity and soap, are starting to blame the China and the Soviet Union abandons its 70-year-old Marxist economy and experiments with ambitious capitalist reforms.

Government officials earlier this year predicted that unemployment would nearly double in 1991 and gross national product would fall by some six per cent.

Even newspapers are printed irregularly because paper is in short supply.

Despite rising popular anger, the government is not expected to

fall, analysts said.

"His government is only for the transition period, no longer, one of the prime minister's opponents said. "But if they fall now, the country falls."

Government leaders have said hardships are a necessary evil as this vast nation locked between China and the Soviet Union abandons its 70-year-old Marxist economy and experiments with ambitious capitalist reforms.

Government officials earlier this year predicted that unemployment would nearly double in 1991 and gross national product would fall by some six per cent.

Richard Briggs, an association spokesman, said pickets also were starting to appear around Chicago and further west.

"America's once-commanding lead in the critical technologies driving economic growth and national security is being seriously challenged by foreign competitors," the council, an organisation composed of industry, labour and education executives, concluded in its two-year study.

The report surveyed nine technology-intensive industries, ranging from aerospace to telecommunications, and came up with a list of 91 technologies considered crucial for U.S. economic prosperity in this decade.

In a sobering assessment, it found that in 15 of the 91 critical technologies, the United States is so far behind that it is not likely to have a presence in the world market through the mid-1990s.

Declining U.S. competitiveness threatens economy and security'

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States is losing badly to foreign competition in numerous high-technology fields considered crucial to the country's economic future and national security, according to a study released recently.

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Among these technologies judged lost are two — display materials and computer memory chips — considered vital for development of high-definition television sets, the next generation of TV receivers in which the United States is trying to catch up to the Japanese.

Other technologies listed in the left column were computer circuit board technology and robotics and other automated equipment.

In 13 other areas, the U.S. position was listed as weak, with American industries behind in technology developments or likely to fall behind in the next five years.

In this category were included such critical fields as advanced metals development, precision bearings and lasers.

George Fisher, chairman of the council and the chief executive officer of Motorola Inc., said the council recognised that its report was coming at a time when Americans were feeling more confident based on the technological progress exhibited by U.S.-made weapons in the Gulf war.

But he said much of that success was generated with technolo-

Hungary asks Poland, Czechoslovakia to start dialogue on free trade zone

BUDAPEST (R) — Hungary has proposed formal talks with Czechoslovakia and Poland designed to create a free trade zone in central Europe as early as next year, a senior Hungarian trade official has said.

Export-level negotiations could conclude by late summer, setting the scene for such a trade-booster zone by the beginning of 1992, Istvan Major, deputy secretary of state at the ministry of international economic relations, said.

"It is our expectation that the echo will be a positive one from both capitals," he told Reuters.

Major portrayed the negotiations as the first firm step toward trilateral cooperation as envisaged by the three nations' leaders at a summit in Visegrad, Hungary, in February.

At that meeting, the three agreed to work closely together to foster political and economic integration with other European countries.

The new trade zone should help spur trade that suffered when the moribund communist trade bloc Comecon switched from barter deals to hard-currency accounting and world prices at the beginning of the year, Major said.

Hungary's trade with Czechoslovakia has dropped sharply although the decline has been less great with Poland.

Once the new zone is set up, the countries could gradually eliminate all duties over a period of three years, although he said details still had to be negotiated.

He estimated the zone would account for around six to eight

per cent of Hungary's foreign trade.

"Our working hypothesis is that it would operate as a single free trade area," he added.

He sought to play down suggestions that the new zone was directed against the Soviet Union or other Comecon states.

"Some people argue that this has an anti-Soviet character or goes against the interests of our other trading partners in the ex-Comecon," he said. "This is not the case. This proposal is just the logical consequence of the negotiations we and other countries are having with the European Community (EC) and EFTA."

Major said Hungary's proposal called for bilateral pacts with Poland and Czechoslovakia, adding he expected Prague and Warsaw to conclude their own

AMMAN EXCHANGE RATES

Sunday, April 14, 1991 Central Bank official rates			
Buy	Sell	Swiss franc	474.2 477.0
French franc		119.0 119.7	
Japanese yen (for 100)		495.9 498.9	
Dutch guilder		356.6 358.7	
Swiss francs		111.9 112.6	
Italian lire (for 100)		54.2 54.5	
Belgian francs		195.6 196.8	
U.S. dollars		401.7 404.1	

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

London (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at mid-session on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Wednesday.			
One Sterling	1.7840/50	U.S. dollars	
One U.S. dollars	1.1490/95	Canadian dollar	
	1.6687/97	Deutschmarks	
	1.8770/80	Dutch guilders	
	1.4225/32	Swiss francs	
	34.32/36	Belgian francs	
	5.6400/50	French francs	
	1236/1237	Italian lire	
	135.75/85	Japanese yen	
	6.0275/25	Swedish crowns	
	6.4950/5000	Norwegian crowns	
	6.3900/50	Danish crowns	
One ounce of gold	360.90/361.40	U.S. dollars	

WORLD STOCK MARKETS

TOKYO — Shares closed firmer for the fifth straight day, spurred by Wall Street's overnight gain and the stronger yen. The Nikkei ended up 167.07, or 0.62 per cent, at 26,980.37, with 450 million shares traded.

SYDNEY — Shares swept to their highest close this year, driven by Wall Street gains and expectations of lower inflation. The All Ordinaries index surged 18.9 points to 1,490.6.

HONG KONG — The Hang Seng index sank 30.45 points to close at 3,687.01 on political uncertainty over Chinese objections to a planned new Hong Kong airport.

SINGAPORE — Shares closed firmer on short-covering and selective bargain-hunting spurred by Wall Street firmness. The Straits Times Industrial index broke resistance at 1,500 to close up 27.62 at 1,513.52.

BOMBAY — The exchange was closed for the Eid festival. Trading resumes on Thursday. On Tuesday, the Stock Exchange index ended 27.53 points down at 1,274.97. The National index shied 7.79 to close at 635.70.

FRANKFURT — Shares ended with a 1.2 per cent rise which took the 30-share DAX index to its highest close since September. The DAX ended 20.47 points higher at 1,623.83.

ZURICH — Late buying of blue chips led the market higher but investors were reluctant to follow Wall Street's strong performance overnight. The SPI index rose eight to 1,080.1.

PARIS — Prices were buoyant at mid-session, building on their opening rise. At 1040 GMT the CAC-40 index was up 24.05 at 1,826.96.

LONDON — Shares remained firm but off their highs after Wall Street opened only slightly firmer as they rallied late on Tuesday. At

Italians turn to Islam

By Clare Pedrick

ROME — Twenty years ago, Rosario Pasquini was a heavy smoker, drank more whisky than was good for him and led what he now describes as a nightmare existence, tormented by the stress of having to succeed in his job as a lawyer in the busy northern city of Milan. Today, Pasquini, now in his early 50's, never drinks or smokes and calls himself Abdumallah.

He still lives in Milan, but he has traded his lawyer's briefcase for something that gives him far more satisfaction. Pasquini is now editor of a small newspaper called "Il Messaggero Dell'Islam". ("The Messenger of Islam") an eight-page tabloid written for the growing numbers of Italians who, like the former lawyers himself, have decided to convert to the Muslim faith.

In Italy the ranks of Christians who have converted to Islam are swelling daily. Just as in France and England — whose most famous convert is the pop singer Cat Stevens — a growing number of Italians are turning to the Muslim faith for spiritual solace. The figures are still relatively low, an estimated 2,000 so far — compared with the nation's 56 million Roman Catholics and 700,000 Muslims from overseas. But the growth is a steady one.

"Every day, people come in wanting to know more about Islam and the conversion process," said Pasquini, who edits his newspaper from an office at Milan's Islamic Centre. "Yesterday it was one, today there were two. They come from all over, from different classes and backgrounds, and they all have different reasons for doing it."

Italian Christians who have decided to embrace Islam include engineers, artists, intellectuals, students and even a nun. Some have taken the step because they married a Muslim, while others it is a purely intellectual or religious choice. But whatever the initial reason, converts

say their final decision has almost always been accompanied by a feeling of frustration with too much consumerism and stress, and a yearning for a spiritual dimension that has become lost in most of Western society.

"Some of the people who decide to become Muslims do so because, like me, they are going through a very difficult period in their life," said Pasquini. "Others have family problems. There are even some who are high school students and have converted in secret, they are scared to tell their parents."

Pasquini himself received support and understanding from his own family, he says. "They took the view that I was old enough to make my mind up for myself, and let me get on with it," he recalled. "In fact, my mother, who is 85 years-old and has remained a Catholic, recently said to me: 'I bless Allah, because if you had continued to live the way you did before you converted, you would be dead by now.'

"At the time I was prey to a terrible mental stress, brought on by the competitiveness that is so prevalent in our type of society. After a long period of searching, I finally arrived at Islam which says that no-one except God has the right to judge and dominate other men. This is what I was looking for. For me it represented a liberation from a society which believes itself to be free, but which instead forces its members to bow under the yoke of many, many different demands."

Like many converts, Pasquini embraced his new faith whole-heartedly. He learned Arabic so he could read the Koran and participate in mosque life without having to rely on translations. His command of the language became so good that he now teaches it. The former lawyer's interpretation of the Muslim faith is strict and unyielding. As well as announcements of births, marriages and conversions, his Muslim newspaper carries advice on how Italian converts should behave. For

example, he advises that a woman who intends to drive her car beyond the boundaries of her own neighbourhood should make sure she is not the other."

Giuseppina, now known as Fatima, was a Roman Catholic nun, studying theology and living in a convent in Modena, in central Italy. She began reading the Koran, and as her interest grew she started having doubts about her own religion and vocation. She took to visiting the Islamic Centre in Milan, and finally, after a great deal of soul-searching, she renounced her vows and converted to Islam. Today, she is married — to a fellow Muslim.

Daniela was born in Sicily and became a convert nine years ago, when she married an Egyptian. She willingly obeys all the rules of her new faith. "When I go out, I always wear a scarf over my head and I keep my legs and arms covered," she said. "A woman should keep all parts of feminine beauty covered, because only her husband has the right to see them. It seems perfectly right to me." In spite of her acceptance of what other Western women might see as limitations, Daniela claims her rela-

tionship with her husband is one of absolute equality.

Franco Leccesi, who prefers to be known as Omar, claims the precise rules laid down by Islam help a person gain greater self-discipline, which in turn leads to physical and spiritual improvement, he says. Looking back to the old days before he converted six years ago, he said: "I always used to try to impose my own self-discipline, but it never lasted very long." Added the 42-year Neapolitan artist: "But in the past six years I've noticed a dramatic improvement in myself. If you pray five times a day it also forces you to break off from the daily treadmill. It makes you stop and reflect and prevents you from becoming an automaton, who lives his life mechanically."

"One thing that strikes me very deeply is the dramatic difference between old people in many Muslim countries, and those in the West," he added. "There, the elderly are often far more lucid and energetic, right up until very old age. They often have remarkable physical and mental powers in comparison with people of the same age over here. It's largely due to the lifestyle they learn from childhood, which enables them to eliminate stress and to do without the kind of things that poison our systems. We Westerners have lost so much of the spiritual dimension of our lives. It's as though we've fallen into a deep sleep. We're living in a world that is so empty, it's very frightening to contemplate."

Like most Italians, Leccesi was brought up a Roman Catholic, but for years he felt that something was missing from his life, he says. "When I read the Bible, I totally agreed with everything it said, but I saw that the practice was very different from the theory. People didn't behave in a way that did (the Bible) justice," he said. A series of visits to the Naples Mosque, together with an Italian friend who had already converted to the Isla-

mic faith, convinced Leccesi that becoming a Muslim would give him what he defines as "the something extra" that he was looking for.

His friends were skeptical at first. "It was quite hard at the beginning. People were upset because it seemed such a strange thing to do. To them, it was a step into the unknown. Some of my more intelligent friends looked at me with a sort of admiration, even though they still thought I was a bit crazy," said Leccesi. His wife also found the decision hard to accept at first. For a start, she had to get used to calling the man she had married as Franco by his new name of Omar. "Now, she sometimes calls me Franco and sometimes Omar, though I really don't mind which," said Leccesi. "You can't force people to believe the things you do, and I've never tried with her, but even she is showing more interest than she once did. You could now describe her as a sympathiser."

In Rome, the number of Italian Muslims is estimated to be between 300 and 400, while the Muslim population as a whole is nearly 30,000. For years, the community has been forced to pray in an annex of the cramped Islamic Centre in the residential Parioli neighbourhood of the city. Now, more than two decades after the idea was first proposed by the late King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, Rome's Muslims are finally getting ready to take possession of their own mosque, a magnificent, 17-domed structure, whose prayer-hall alone will accommodate 2,000 people at a time.

The date for the opening ceremony has yet to be fixed, but already weekly prayer services are being held in the building, which is lacking only the final touches. Community officials predict the unveiling will be held in late spring or early summer. The new Islamic Centre, housed in a separate structure on the same site, is already in operation. Aside from the offices, the centre includes a theatre.



Abdumallah (left) is now editor of a newspaper for the growing number of Italians who have converted to Islam. With him is Ali Abu Shwaima, director of the Milan Islamic Centre.

years to come, that many more Europeans will follow suit.

"Islam rises above cultural and racial divisions," he said.

"I am a Muslim, just as a Filipino or an Indonesian may be. There is absolutely no difference. The rhythm of my lifestyle is similar to theirs, and different from that of the society to which I once belonged. I pray five times a day, and in between those prayers I find I'm not greedy or envious. I don't get angry or violent. I'm not competitive and I don't prevaricate. I think in the future there are going to be a great many more people who will make the same choice as I have" — World News Link.

Rab dumallah (left) is now editor of a newspaper for the growing number of Italians who have converted to Islam. With him is Ali Abu Shwaima, director of the Milan Islamic Centre.

— World News Link.

Women still fighting after all these years

By Katia Sabet

CAIRO — "Women are losing more and more ground," complains Egypt's Amina Al Said sadly. For this particular woman, the observation has more than a passing significance. For Said, now in her eighties, is a veteran of the Egyptian woman's struggle for emancipation. As a writer, journalist, television and radio commentator, she has fought for well over half a century, dedicating her life to furthering the cause of women in her country.

Sitting in her vast office in Dar Al Hilal, one of Egypt's leading publishing houses, Said speaks of her concern at certain trends in modern-day Egyptian society. Not least among them, she says, is the growing pressure on women to go back to wearing the veil. The movement, says Egypt's best known feminist, is the product of ideas that bear little relation to the real spirit of the Muslim religion. Outspoken and uncompromising, Said deplores the fact that these women are being forced to give up the very freedoms and privileges she and other pioneers fought so hard to obtain in the 1920s and 1930s.

The phenomenon, says Said, concerns a specific, albeit large, sector of society. It does not, for example, extend to Egypt's peasant women who continue to wear the traditional "mendil," a scarf which covers the hair, rather like the kerchief worn by women in parts of Eastern

Europe. With their faces bare, these women enjoy more independence and autonomy than is often assumed and live free and respected within the tight-knit context of peasant family life, she says. Equally, the privileged women in the upper reaches of Egyptian society enjoy the same lifestyle as their counterparts in Paris, London, or New York.

The group that worries Said, she says, is Egypt's very large urban middle class. These are women who have been brought up in an over-loaded education system in which most have gained only limited knowledge, even if they have reached university level. In an uncertain regional climate and with unclear prospects for their country's future, their ambitions are ill-defined, says Said. These are the women who are most vulnerable and most likely to suffer from the shortcomings of Egypt's precarious economic recovery, she adds.

A disciple of Egypt's first and most renowned feminists, Said was Egypt's first ever female journalist. Her face and voice are known to millions for her many television and radio appearances, and for the past 40 years she has edited a famous column called "Ask Me" in the weekly *Mussawar* magazine in which she publishes and answers readers' letters, raising important social and other issues.

Said's militancy started from an early age. "At the beginning of this century, my

father and mother refused the idea of the 'hejab' (veil). At university, where I was part of the second group of girls ever to be admitted, the women all wore hats. I did not," she recalled. "They were conformists and hated the sight of my uncovered hair. One day, there was a serious argument and I had to turn to the dean of the university." At the time, the dean was none other than the famous blind Egyptian novelist Taha Hussein. "He was a brilliant example of civilisation and liberalism in the Muslim World, and naturally, he supported me and encouraged me in my attitude," said Said.

That was the first of many more serious battles. Over the years, Said's stand against those who would have women cover themselves from head to toe has earned bitter criticism and even threats of physical violence. "My position is known throughout the Arab World. I have come under attack and people have written some disgusting things about me," she said, pointing to a pile of hate mail on her desk. "I have received letters full of insults and even death threats. I even got a letter written in blood. The authors, who never gave their name, dipped their pen in blood to write: 'You are a bad woman, and other things I shall not repeat. We will slash your stomach open with a knife and feed your guts to the street dogs. Before that, we will kill

your three children so you die with a broken heart.'"

Just as she has always done, Said brushes such threats aside. "I am not afraid," she asserts, "and I continue to criticise the things that are done in our society in the name of Islam. This is not Islam, it is fanaticism. The Islamic religion dictates that a woman should be decent and modest and that her body should be covered in public. Islam never said women have to be turned into some sort of walking tent with a little slit for the eyes."

Said says her greatest worry is that today's woman may be bowing under the pressure of the fundamentalists and losing their grip on the freedoms that made the Egyptian woman among the most advanced in the Muslim World. Looking back on the early days of her newspaper column, she reflects how things have changed: "At that time, what women wanted most was to learn, to find a way of educating themselves, to develop," she said. "Later, they started looking for work as a way of becoming more independent. But now we are witnessing a period of recession, a terrible crisis. Even the girls who are educated are more and more backward looking; their interests are more and more futile."

Increasing numbers of women to wear the veil and men to grow beards. Some Sheikhs, even those who wear the traditional Islamic costumes, agree with me," she argues. "Some of them do not allow their daughters to wear the veil."

For Said, one of the reasons for the resurgence of fundamentalism goes back to a deliberate policy decided by former Egyptian President Anwar Al Sadat. "His mistake, his big mistake was to believe that he could combat Communism, which he abhorred, by encouraging fundamentalism. Communism, was never a real danger in Egypt, and I told the late president that it was a mistake to try and beat it in this way," she said. "In effect, one form of fanaticism took the place of another, and fanaticism spreads very easily among people who are not educated and do not have the intellectual means to judge for themselves."

"Nowadays, things are very confused and young people don't know where the true Islam is," she added. "This is the root of the problem. Our young people are in desperate need of guidance. At least now, religious leaders who know what they are talking about are being given more of a chance to express themselves; we have worked for this."

In spite of her views, she is not alone in raising her voice against the forces that are encouraging

be played by open-minded religious leaders. Their guidance could be of great importance in providing help and advice to Egypt's youth. The religious figure she herself most admires is Sheikh Tantawi, the Mufti of Egypt's highest religious authority, the Diara. "He is an exceptional person. He is the one who should be talking to the people and speaking to our youth!" she said enthusiastically.

Nevertheless, Said is harsh in her criticism of some other religious officials whom she accuses of misleading the people. Some, she goes so far as to say, "are the cause of all our problems, including (Egypt's) population explosion, because of the crazy things they preach at the mosques and, unfortunately, on television. When for example, one of these sheikhs says: 'Get married and multiply so that God can rejoice,' he is distorting the spirit of the religion."

"How can God rejoice when he sees miserable, ragged children, who are sick and without a real place in their over-crowded families?" she asked. "The strength of a people is not measured by its numbers, but by its level of culture, health and vitality."

Anger wells up in Said's words when she talks about the subject that is closest to her heart. "We have been fighting for 50 years, and now I am finding myself telling



Amina Al Said
women: 'Be careful, you are in the process of destroying everything we have won,'" she said heatedly. What riles her most, she says, is that some of the laws passed in favour of women have been repealed in recent years. The laws dealt with divorce, child custody, and other rights. "What is even more absurd is that some women in the parliament helped repeal the very laws that were in their interest," she said bitterly.

Despite the setbacks, Said shows no signs of giving up on the struggle to which she has devoted her life. The

seasoned campaigner knows she has one important asset on her side — the freedom of speech in the Egyptian media. Not a week goes by when this octogenarian feminist is not in the press and on television, raising questions and sparking debates. Many people would rather she kept a lower profile, and retired gracefully into the background. But in spite of her advanced years, Said has made it clear hers is a voice that will not be silenced, either now, or after she has gone to the grave — World News Link.

JTV CHANNEL 2 WEEKLY PREVIEW

Thursday, April 18

8:30 Day By Day

That Saturday Feeling

When Ross applies a clever trick on his dad, it works like magic to such an extent that Ross in the end gets in trouble for it.

9:10 Black Forest Clinics

The Value Of Life

In this episode a family of a young couple learns the truth of highly philosophical issue... that anybody's life is too valuable to waste.

10:00 News in English

10:20 Movie Of The Week
Drop Out Further

Starring: Dick Van Dyke, George Coe

A successful family-man suddenly wakes up to the fact that his life has become empty of any real meaning and diligently sets about changing his life.

Friday, April 19

8:30 Night Court

Judge Harold notices a change of behaviour in his secretary and offers help and her response gets him in real trouble.

9:10 Shakespeare

10:00 News in English

10:20 Feature Film
Jailhouse Rock

Keri Houlihan stars in Our House on Wednesday at 9:10.

Starring: Elvis Presley and Judy Tyler

This is the definitive Elvis Presley classic rock n' roll movie and it tells the story of an ex-convict's rise to stardom.

Saturday, April 20

8:30 No Job For A Lady

Being a member of a committee is something to rave about, but will it be alright for our heroine?

Encounter

9:10 News in English

10:20 Feature Film
Crisis In Mid Air

Starring: George Peppard

Working in a control tower at a major airport can wreck not only your nervous system, but your lifestyle as well.

Sunday, April 21

8:30 Mother And Son

9:10 All Our Children

Fighting For Health
This documentary series deals with children's nutrition in different countries.

10:00 News in English

10:20 Behaving Badly (Drama Series)
Brigitte was leading a happy, normal life until Mark, her husband, marries another.

Ex-convicts commit a murder, and Ethan avoids committing one himself.

Monday, April 22

8:30 Empty Nest

Dr. West meets a female doctor. Nothing is wrong with that except that she is a better than him.

9:10 Inside Story

10:00 News in English

10:20 Derrick

When thieves disagree among themselves, the truth becomes easily apparent.

Tuesday, April 23

8:30 Charles In Charge

9:10 Costeau (Documentary)

10:00 News in English

10:20 Columbo

Wednesday, April 24

8:30 After Henry

The grandmother loves to gossip and Sarah would like her to drop this nasty habit.

9:10 Our House

10:00 News in English

10:20 Behaving Badly (Drama Series)
Brigitte was leading a happy, normal life until Mark, her husband, marries another.

"I'm getting married so you'll have a new mother," Hussein said to his and Lucy's children as they stared unbelievingly at him with horror stricken faces. "If our luck remains good, she'll be here before Ramadan ends and spend the Eid holiday with us," and off he went to his fiancee's house. When Lucy was alive, Hussein complained of uncounted pains which seemed to abound in either his legs, back, teeth, or some place else. But now, rejuvenated by a sudden spring romance, he dashed out of the house poor Lucy helped to build with dyed black hair greased down to his thick head. Coloured, freshly shaved and wearing freshly pressed clothes, he sprang in his pick-up and tore off to visit his bride-to-be with the fervour of a teenager.

Meanwhile, in Lucy's desolate gray house, her children stared at the door which had just borne their father out of their sight. They were divided into two camps; those who favoured their father's marriage and those against. The three older children totally opposed their father's marriage, for who could replace their dear mother Lucy. "He could have at least waited a bit longer," his irate oldest son said. "He was looking for a bride the second day after our mother died. He got engaged to that thing he calls our substitute mother before the forty day mourning period had finished," his son Khaled said as fire flamed in his eyes.

"I agree," his older sister said. "Remember the day after the funeral when all our father's brothers and sisters shut themselves in the guest room holding a secret meeting urging our father to marry?"

"Yeah, and everyone one of us entered the room, they kicked us out, but we knew what was going on!" Lucy's second oldest son, Mohammad, aged 14 said as his dark eyes flashed in anger.

However, Abdullah, on the opposite side, demanded: "What's wrong with you guys? Dad says he's going to get us a new mother and she'll take care of us like mom used to. Why are you all so angry?"

"I want a mommy," seven year old Abdul Fattah whined. "I miss my mommy. I don't know how to live without her!" His lips formed into a pout and he cast his eyes down on the red carpet where he was sitting with his brothers and sister.

"Oh, poor Abdul Fattah! No one can ever be your real mommy! Don't expect dad's new wife to be like mom. No one could ever replace her or care for us like she did," and when she saw the sad look contorted on his face, sister Shatha said: "But I love you, Habebeh. I'll take care of you!" And the tears that lived in her heart quickly formed in her eyes and quietly rolled down her cheeks.

Next day, Lucy's children climbed in their father's pick-up and headed for their farm where all his clan were gathering to celebrate his engagement. Lucy's brothers and sisters and her old mother who could hardly walk, yet had borne her daughter's death with grace and dignity were not invited, nor would they have gone even if they had been, for they were deeply wounded that Lucy's husband didn't have the decent courtesy to wait at least two months after

his wife's death before considering marriage.

So there his relatives sat, among the budding fruit trees, the scent of spring flowers emanating the dry dusty air just where Lucy had sat not so very long ago. Although it was Ramadan, Hussein's brothers and sisters were caught in the tide of wedding fever. Hands clapped until they stung and changed to a bright red. The very women who had shed huge crocodile tears directly after Lucy's death were now singing with great enthusiasm and yodeling. Their voices grew hoarse, but they kept on anyway. After all, it wasn't every day that their brother would be getting married. Small Abdul Fattah sat awed in the midst of the celebration dreaming of the day when his new mother would love him. Abdullah, the second youngest, forgot himself and his dead mother and joined in the festivities, dancing, clapping his hands and singing until his throat turned raw too. But the three older children sat enraged inside the tiny house that had been built on the farm, tears welling and their hearts beating rapidly. Had their mother been so insignificant that their father and his relatives couldn't have waited just a while longer? And exactly who was this bride that was going to take over their mother's house and intrude in their lives?

After the ceremony was over, Lucy's family returned to their dark house. Just before they went to bed, their father jubilantly said: "See children, I'm going to take care of you. Soon your new mother will be here. Stick with me and my brothers and sisters. Don't ever depend on Lucy's family. What have they done for you since your mother died? Nothing! But my relatives are getting me married!"

Hence, Lucy's children tumbled to their beds, their eyes heavy with sleep. Contented, the two youngest dreamed of their new mother who would shed love on them just like their mother used to, but the older ones who were filled with doubts and fears, dreamed nightmares of a woman who would rule Lucy's house and mistreat them.

Lucy's not quite cold in her grave and her husband has forgotten her. He has no respect for the memory of his deceased wife. He has no respect for Lucy's side of the family or for her old mother who has heart trouble. They are still mourning the loss of their dear Lucy. The dowry for the new bride is made up from Lucy's gold and savings. Hussein in a selfish man who has turned his children against his wife's family to excuse his haste in getting married to a girl young enough to be his daughter. To some men, women are like disposable napkins — when one is finished there is another to take its place. But will the stepmother replace Lucy? Will she bestow the same tender hugs, kisses and concern on Lucy's small son?

Life is fleeting. It is like passing in one door and out another. Lucy has become just a memory as if she didn't ever exist, but she will live forever in the hearts of those who truly loved her. She was a rose which fed on stagnant waters and could not survive in a forest of deprivation. But I could have told you Lucy, this world was never meant for one as beautiful as you!

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

Thursday, April 18

1906 — Earthquake rocks San Francisco, California, touching off fires that almost destroy city, and about 700 people perish.

1912 — Turkey announces closure of Dardanelles Straits to shipping.

1927 — Split develops in Kuomintang Party between Chiang Kai-Shek and radical elements.

1942 — U.S. bombers led by Lieutenant General James Doolittle attack Tokyo and other Japanese cities in World War II.

1949 — Republic of Eire is formally proclaimed in Dublin.

1962 — West Indies Federation is terminated.

1965 — Uganda becomes first non-Communist nation to join Soviet Union in formal denunciation of U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

1976 — About 40,000 Israelis march into occupied West Bank demanding that Israel annex the territory.

1988 — U.S. Navy destroys two offshore Iranian oil platforms, bombs two Iranian navy frigates in retaliation for mine explosion that damaged U.S. frigate.

1990 — Eleven school children and four others are killed when school bus is set ablaze by street-fighters in Beirut.

Friday, April 19

1775 — War of American independence opens with defeat of British at Lexington

and Concord.

1783 — U.S. Congress announces end of war of American independence.

1911 — Separation of church and state in Portugal.

1921 — Government of Ireland act goes into effect.

1928 — Japan occupies Shantung in China.

1964 — Coalition government in Laos is deposed by right-wing military group.

1975 — India's first satellite is launched by Soviet rocket.

1977 — Police in South Korea carry out nationwide roundup of political opponents of government.

1988 — Court in Dusseldorf convicts Abbas Hamadi of direct involvement in 1987 kidnapping of two West Germans in Beirut, Lebanon.

1989 — Protests erupt in Jordan against price increases.

1990 — In Nicaragua, representatives of contras, outgoing Sandinista government and incoming government of Violetta Barrios Chamorro agree on a ceasefire, effective same day.

Saturday, April 20

1919 — King Nicholas is dethroned in Montenegro, which votes for union with Serbo-Slovene-Croat state (Yugoslavia).

1923 — Egyptian constitution is adopted.

1945 — Soviet forces penetrate Berlin defenses in World War II.

1957 — United States resumes aid to Israel; Japan protests to Soviet Union over nuclear tests.

1959 — United Federal Party wins northern Rhodesia elections, and African National Congress is suppressed.

1954 — United States flies French battalion to Indochina to defend Dien Bien Phu.

1956 — Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Yemen sign military alliance at Jeddah.

1961 — United Nations calls for elections in Ruanda and Burundi; Revolt breaks out in Algeria under General Maurice Challe.

1967 — Army seizes control in Greece.

1972 — Two U.S. Apollo 16 astronauts spend seven hours exploring highlands of the moon.

1975 — South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu resigns, denounces United States as untrustworthy, and names successor to seek negotiations with Communist forces sweeping across country.

1977 — Pakistan's Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto assumes emergency powers and imposes martial law on three major cities in crackdown on opponents trying to force his resignation.

1986 — Soldiers attack rebel camp in Philippines, and 41 people are killed.

1987 — Terrorists explode powerful bomb at height of rush hour near main bus station in Colombo, Sri Lanka, killing as many as 150 people.

1989 — Thousands of students, shouting for democracy and human rights, march from campuses to converge on Tiananmen Square in Peking, China.

1990 — Moscow expands its energy embargo of Lithuania to include shipments of food, metal and industrial parts, in effort to get that republic to revoke declaration of independence.

By The Associated Press

Sunday, April 21

753 B.C. — Tradition has it that Rome is founded by Romulus on this date.

1500 — Pedro Alvarez Cabral lands in Brazil, which he claims for Portugal.

1572 — Britain and France sign defensive treaty.

1839 — Turkish army invades Syria in opposition to Mehmet Ali.

1898 — United States recognises independence of Cuba.

1928 — France's Aristide Briand submits his draft treaty for outlawing war.

By The Associated Press

Lucy, part two

By E. Yaghi

"I'm getting married so you'll have a new mother," Hussein said to his and Lucy's children as they stared unbelievingly at him with horror stricken faces. "If our luck remains good, she'll be here before Ramadan ends and spend the Eid holiday with us," and off he went to his fiancee's house. When Lucy was alive, Hussein complained of uncounted pains which seemed to abound in either his legs, back, teeth, or some place else. But now, rejuvenated by a sudden spring romance, he dashed out of the house poor Lucy helped to build with dyed black hair greased down to his thick head. Coloured, freshly shaved and wearing freshly pressed clothes, he sprang in his pick-up and tore off to visit his bride-to-be with the fervour of a teenager.

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"Oh, poor Abdul Fattah! No one can ever be your real mommy! Don't expect dad's new wife to be like mom. No one could ever replace her or care

Gene Hackman — an interesting character audiences like

By Bob Thomas
The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — He has starred in 19 films in the past decade, but Gene Hackman does not seem to have won out his welcome at movie houses. His secret may be found in the approach to his most recent role.

"I felt that if I could make him an interesting character that audiences would like, whether they liked what he did was not as important as to whether they ended up liking to watch him," Hackman said.

That could be the key to his continued acceptance by producers and public alike: He is totally believable as a flawed but basically decent human being. His character of New York policeman Popeye Doyle in *The French Connection* was loud, boorish and out of control, but he was fascinating enough to win Hackman the Academy Award for Best Actor of 1971.

Many of the movies he's made in the last 10 years have been highly forgettable (*Eureka*, *Full Moon In Blue Water*, *Loose Cannons*). Yet

his own work has never been faulted. His latest release is 20th Century Fox's *Class Action*.

Hackman is cast as liberal San Francisco lawyer Jedediah Ward, who gained fame in the contentious 1960s and is still fighting for people's causes. His daughter, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, works for an establishment law firm. Father and daughter oppose each other in a class-action lawsuit against an auto manufacturer.

"The picture had been around for a year or so," Hackman related in an interview, "and I think they (Interscope Productions) had shopped a couple of actors. ... I had known about it all that time, and I really wanted to do it. So I kept after my agent to keep abreast of what was going on."

"I thought it was a character who would be fun to play, because he wasn't all black and he wasn't all white. He was somewhere in the gray area, like all of us are. None of us have lives that aren't suspect in some ways."

"If you live your life on the stage, whether as a trial lawyer or an actor or anybody

who is 'out there' and needs a big ego to get where you do, then you are susceptible to a lot of the seductions that go along with that."

In the case of Ward, he was an adulterous husband, and that is the source of antagonism with his daughter.

In many ways, Hackman said, the movie belongs to Mastrantonio. "She is an actress that people aren't as well aware of as they should be. I think she's a terrific actress. She plays a lot of things that are unattractive about those kinds of corporate women ... She was able to do that character, I felt, with a great deal of love and sensitivity while maintaining a semblance of femininity."

Hackman, who underwent artery-widening surgery to avoid a heart attack last July, said he was trying to cut down on his work load.

"I have this terrible compulsion to work all the time," he confessed, "because I do love the acting when I'm actually doing it. I don't like some of the things that go on in the business, no one does. But when I'm actually doing it (acting), I've never experienced anything like it."

"There are plenty of films that I wish I hadn't done," he said with a laugh. "But at the time it seemed like a good idea. Sometimes as an actor you feel that you can get away with it. You can't really. It does catch up with you."

"Over the years, doing a few too many commercial endeavours does catch up with you. People may think that you sold out, or that you're not a serious actor. Luckily, I'm still offered serious roles, so I think I've weathered those things."

"The last couple of years people have said, 'you and Michael Caine are in some kind of a race to see who can do the most films.' I try to smile and laugh about that. But I don't find it so funny. I think that people might think I'm being greedy or trying to do all the roles. I'm not, really. I just love to work."

That has been true since his early years in Danville, Illinois, where he was born in 1931. His father abandoned the family when Hackman was 13, and the boy lied his way into the U.S. Marines at 16. His work as an armed forces radio announcer lured him into acting. After drifting

around for 10 years, he went to study at the Pasadena Playhouse in California and in New York.

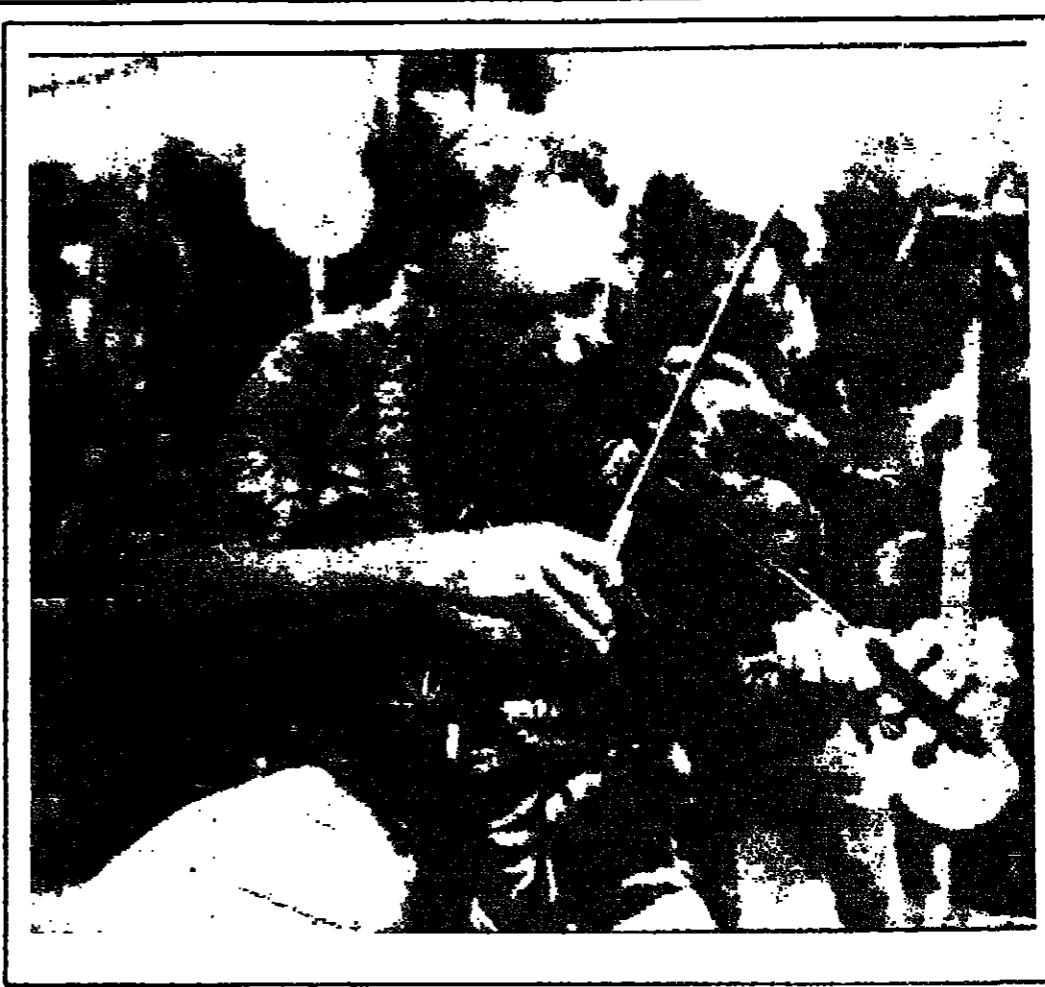
"I had an acting teacher early on who told me I was going to be a character actor," he said. "I didn't really understand what that meant. In the early days I thought of myself as a character actor, unattractive and full of quirks. It wasn't until later on that I felt that I didn't have to do those things."

Hackman appeared in a few minor film roles until *Bonnie And Clyde* (1967) won him an Oscar nomination. Except for a two-year "burn-out" period after *Superman* in 1978, he has been working ever since.

He does have other diversions, such as painting, drawing and flying stunts in airplanes. He and his son have given themselves two years to build a pair of airplanes from a manual.

Hackman has one unreleased film, *Company Business*, with Mikhail Baryshnikov, and nothing on his future book.

"I may never work again," he said unconvincedly.



Gene Hackman

Peter Ustinov, at 70, sets hectic pace

By Tony Czuczka
The Associated Press

GENEVA — It's still hard to keep up with Sir Peter Ustinov as he nears 70.

Actor, author, inveterate ham and roving activist for the world's children, Ustinov

calls the idea of entering a new decade "beautiful." He intends to stay busy.

"In writing, I'm just hitting my stride," he said on a brief stop in Switzerland, his main residence. Coming from Paris, where he recorded a children's introduction to the

symphony orchestra in Germany, he's headed for a ceremony honouring him at London's National Film Institute.

The past year saw him on the road promoting two new novels and on stage in London as masterful storyteller and mimic in a one-man show.

He's been practising his George Bush imitation before taking the show to San Francisco this month, having changed his earlier opinion that there's nothing to imitate.

While keeping two as-yet undisclosed movie projects in the works, he also writes a weekly newspaper column. "It gives me the possibility of letting off steam and being very serene in normal life," he says.

Ustinov was born in London 70 years ago Tuesday. His Russian mother, Nadia Benois, was an artist and stage designer. His father Iona Ustinov, a journalist by trade, worked for a time at

the German embassy in London.

He traces his career roots to the trials of his childhood nurse in London.

Supposedly taken out for a walk, little Peter would be parked in his baby carriage and the nurse "disappeared down some steps into a basement."

A caged parrot was left outside, "presumably in order to keep me quiet," but bird and baby soon began imitating each other, Ustinov recalls in his 1977 autobiography *Dear Me*.

Initially seeing drama as "an escape road from the dismal rat-race of school," Ustinov appeared in his first revue in 1940. The same year his first play was hailed by London critics and he got married. Ustinov was 19.

He began making films in the army during World War II but described his military experience as loathsome. Ustinov's movie roles range from Roman Emperor Nero to Agatha Christie's de-

tective Hercule Poirot, and he won two Academy Awards for supporting actor in the 1960s. He has written some 20 plays and directed opera productions and documentaries. For a change, he was rector of a small Scottish university for six years.

Less fond memories are the commercials he made to help finance the settlement of his second divorce in 1971. But looking back is not his style.

"I'm very unsentimental about past things," says Ustinov. "I'm horrified to see myself talking lines I've forgotten. That seems to me uncanny and dreadful."

Once described as resembling a giant panda, Ustinov usually seems to have a twinkle in his blue eyes. At the drop of a hat, he mimics Margaret Thatcher, a French general or a flock of singing Albanian children.

His serious side and firm opinions about world affairs,



In addition to his numerous activities, Peter Ustinov is also involved in UNICEF action in favour of underprivileged children.

meanwhile, prove controversial.

"He's a man that has done so much already and really changed Europe, he couldn't have been expected to see further than he did," he says.

"The Russian democracy is so young, it's as touching as watching a child take its first steps."

Home for Ustinov and his French third wife, Helene, is a house in the vineyards above Lake Geneva, complete with wine cellar and

huge classical music collection.

"I love living in Switzerland because they leave you really much alone," he says.

"I come here in order to disappear, to sleep and to write."

Ustinov writes in longhand. Friends admire his ability to let thoughts jell, then finish a book in one relatively short spurt.

French cinema alive and well after a decade in decline

By Marilyn August
The Associated Press

PARIS — After nearly a decade in decline, the French movie industry is getting back on its feet, thanks to more homegrown box-office hits filling theaters at home and abroad.

Once a national passion, movie-going has been undercut by the increasing availability of video recorders and by French television, which broadcasts feature movies at prime time with few, if any, commercial breaks.

During the 1980s, many theaters closed and ticket prices shot up. At 40-50 francs (\$8-10), movie-going became a luxury many families could no longer afford.

But the downward trend has been reversed. According to the National Cinema Centre, movie attendance in 1990 was 121.8 million — the first increase (about 1 million) recorded since 1982.

Yet there's still a far cry from the 1968 attendance 450 million.

In 1990 box-office receipts totaled 3.8 billion francs (\$722 million), a 4 per cent jump over 1989.

"The hemorrhaging of spectators has been stopped," Culture Minister Jack Lang said in an interview published in *Le Monde*.

Another good sign, he

said, is that more people are going to see French-made films — 37 per cent in 1990 as compared to 34 per cent in 1989.

There are also more French films. In 1990 French directors shot 145 film, 10 more than the previous year.

For the first time in more than a decade, six French films were among the year's 10 top box office hits. In 1989, there was only one.

"Look at other European countries, and you'll see that American films monopolize their top 10 lists," Lang said.

For director Luc Besson, one of France's hottest young directors with several popular triumphs to his credit, there's no shortage of talent, just hard work.

His *Nikita* an exotic tale of a street punk turned professional killer, took years to make, but the effort paid off.

The film — the ultimate in slick, stylized violence — received nine Cesar nominations and launched Anne Parillaud to stardom. She won the coveted Best Actress Award for her performance as the illiterate, rebellious Nikita reborn as a crack government agent.

"The French are going to have to learn that good movies aren't made over lunch at Fouquet's," Besson, 31, said referring to the film industry's famed watering hole on the Champs-Elysees.

"I don't think industry professionals demand enough of themselves. Writing a script is a full-time job, and you

have to do it at a desk, from morning till night," he said.

The Cinema D'Auteur, low budget, personal and intimate portrayals of French life, is back in fashion, judging from the crop of French movies crowned with Césars this year.

They include Jacques Doillon's *Le Petit Chambellan*, about a juvenile delinquent looking for his lost sister, and Christian Vincent's *La Discrete*, the story of an affected left brain intellectual who keeps a diary about his efforts to seduce a young girl.

The industry's turnaround is no surprise, for the government has worked hard to assure a steady crop of filmmakers, renovate and build new theaters across France.

Lang unveiled plans to create a "University Of Film" to supplement the Institute for Higher Cinema Studies, an influential film school which turns away three times more students than it accepts.

He has earmarked additional government funding for upgrading movie theaters with the latest in sound and screen technology. In 1990, four million francs (\$800,000) went into modernizing 20 Paris theaters.

Lang also said he would like to create a monthly pass that would allow the purchaser unlimited entry to cinemas across France.

ets have been selling out elsewhere across eastern Germany, and the film is being held over in cinemas throughout the region.

German critics like the film as well.

The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* said the movie "operates with a classic comic means: using known stereotypes which are transformed into something absurd."

The newspaper commentary also praised the film's "sensitive and respectful" portrayal of eastern Germans.

The director, Peter Timm, was forced to emigrate to the west in 1973 after running afoul of the Communist East German regime. The cast members are eastern Germans, although the film was made by Bavaria Film of Munich.

The story opens in the grim industrial city of Bitterfeld sometime after East Germany opened its borders in late 1989.

Udo Strutz, the somewhat naive head of the family, decides to treat his wife Rita and daughter Jacqueline to a trip to Italy.

Facing a shortage of guidebooks to the free world in old East Germany, Udo takes along his copy of Goethe's *Italian Journey*, a romantic

Rita and Jacqueline, meanwhile, go browsing in Munich boutiques, and Jacqueline is continuously pestered by leering West German men.

Finally, one Bavarian — a trucker driving a load of new cars — shows that western Germans can be generous. He invites the Strutz family to put their Trabant on the transporter so they can take a break from driving.

Udo quickly regrets the decision.

"You know how to double the value of a Trabi? Fill it up with gasoline," cracks the trucker.

When the trucker and the Strutz family part, Udo looks downcast.

"One-hundred and eighten Trabi jokes," he moans.

On arrival in Italy, Udo is seized by a poetic muse, wistfully quoting Goethe while gazing across a picture-perfect vista.

Rita Strutz rediscovers her youth, and Jacqueline finds that being an east German can be fashionable.

Meanwhile, Udo's quaint ways charm beautiful Italian women.

After a near catastrophe with the Trabi, the Strutz family heads home. They've become wiser about the ways of the Western World and more appreciative of their own people in the east.

Florida schools develop programme for 'crack babies'

By Stephen Morrill
Reuter

TAMPA, Florida — Schools throughout the United States are having to tackle the special difficulties of a new group of pupils — "crack babies."

The crack epidemic struck about five years ago and now teachers are having to cope with the behavioural and learning problems of children whose mothers used the cocaine-based drug during pregnancy.

Short attention spans, difficulty following instructions and inability to respond to

information are some of the disabilities the children are born with.

Hillsborough County, which includes Tampa, is the first authority in the country to develop a training programme for teachers to deal with them. Experts believe the programme could be applied nationwide.

"Some problems pop up right at the beginning," said Linda Delapenha, supervisor of Primary Diagnostic Services in Tampa schools. "But most don't. The problems are subtle. And remember, we don't have a good database on this."

Delapenha estimated that about one-tenth of the 12,000 children entering the county public schools annually were affected prenatally by their mother's drug use. Research has shown even higher rates in some communities.

Children whose families have been affected by drug abuse or who have been handed back and forth from one foster family to another can also suffer emotional traumas. Some have speech impediments because of lack of oxygen at birth, another effect of drug abuse.

"There is no typical profile for kids prenatally exposed to

drugs. A lot depends on how many drugs the mother took, in what combination, whether she stopped, whether she had good prenatal care," said Carol Cole, a teacher at the Los Angeles Unified School District's Salvin Special Education Centre.

Cole's pioneer work on teaching "crack kids" helped lay the foundation for the Tampa programme.

The four-year-old Los Angeles project, known as PED (prenatally exposed todruugs), sets aside four special classroom, each with six to eight pupils and two or

three teachers and assistants. Los Angeles plans to implement a programme in some schools next year, said Cole.

The PED programme also teaches the pupils' guardians, who are the child's natural parents in only about a third of cases. Most of the children live with their grandparents or in foster homes.

Special classrooms and two-to-one teacher-student ratios are expensive, however. In Tampa, Delapenha is training teachers from all over the county to help such children within "normal" classrooms.

She is now taking her

second class of teachers, and preparing to take her methods on the road to schools around Florida and the country.

Her approach aims to allay the young pupils' fears by giving them more structure, more predictability, than normal children usually need.

Large illustrated timetables show the child where each class fits into the day's programme. The teacher gives careful criticism to help the child develop a positive self-image. Choices are kept simple and clear-cut until the child can catch up with his or her peers.

The only long-term, continuous study of children born to drug-addicted mothers was conducted by the National Association of Prenatal Addiction Research and Education in Chicago.

The association, known as NAPARE, treated drug-abusing pregnant women and followed the progress of their offspring.

NAPARE found in a 1988 study that one-tenth of the mothers used drugs during their pregnancy.

The Los Angeles experimental programme built on NAPARE's work, and Hillsborough County in turn

drew on data gleaned from California.

The experts all agree that the teacher has to deal with the result, not the cause.

"We focus on intervention," Delapinha says. "We don't worry too much about the cause. Too often, teachers want to put these kids into special education classes, which is not necessarily appropriate."

"We deal with the presented problem and help those children reach their potential," says Cole. "Why they have the problem isn't as important."

'High-fiber diet helps protect against breast cancer'

WASHINGTON (AP) — Eating foods high in fiber may help protect against breast cancer, researchers say in a study suggesting broader benefits for a substance already thought to help in preventing colon cancer.

In the study, published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, the researchers report that laboratory studies in other diets reduce many fewer breast tumours than rats who received little or no fiber.

"The amount of fiber in a diet that is similar to our western diet, you can significantly reduce the amount of mammary cancer, down to the level of a low-fat diet," said Leonard Cohen, a research scientist at the American Health Foundation.

"It shows that the fiber itself contains substances which, when they get into the blood stream, will inhibit the

formation of a mammary tumour," he said. "What seems to be happening is that fiber by some magical means that we don't understand is creating changes in the hormone system which protect against breast cancer."

The researchers' report says the way fiber might work against breast cancer seemed different between rats and humans, but they still said the new findings "suggest that dietary fiber may function as an antipromoting agent in human breast cancer."

Cohen said there have been many studies that suggest fiber in the diet can help prevent colon cancer but none to see if a high-fiber diet would have any effect on breast cancer.

He and his team used four groups of 30 rats each and gave them injections of a drug that causes breast cancer.

The Associated Press LONDON — Researchers studying women prone to miscarriages discovered a chemical abnormality which seems to interfere with pregnancies, and say small doses of Aspirin may help.

A University of Helsinki study, reported in the medical journal *Lancet*, found that two chemicals that work closely to coordinate blood flow were out of sync in the women, who had at least three miscarriages.

Blood flow problems are associated with miscarriages. During pregnancy, the women produced high levels

of Thromboxane, which slows blood flow, and low levels of Prostacyclin, which facilitates it, said Dr. Olavi Ylikorkkala, professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Helsinki University.

One baby Aspirin (81 milligrams) a day blocks Thromboxane without affecting Prostacyclin, and may bring the system back to normal, said Ylikorkkala, whose study did not test the effects of Aspirin.

"Using Aspirin is reasonable," said Dr. Ervin E. Jones, associate professor of reproductive endocrinology at Yale University in the United States. He added that

ongoing studies are testing the effect of Aspirin on women prone to miscarriages.

Dr. James Mowbray, an immunopathologist and leading investigator of miscarriages at London's St. Mary's Hospital, said he treats some women with a combination of Aspirin and Heparin, an anti-coagulant, to ease blood flow to the placenta.

The chemical imbalance theory remains to be confirmed, added Mowbray, but it could be that placenta arteries, which are different from arteries in the rest of the body, are more sensitive to

blood-clotting chemicals. A slight deviation in the system could lead to death of the fetus, he said.

Ylikorkkala believes that too much Thromboxane leads to vasospasms, blunting the blood from getting to the fetus.

On the other hand, "they may be looking at a consequence of miscarriage," such as changes associated with detachment of the placenta from the uterus or expulsion of the embryo, added Mowbray.

Researchers don't know whether the blood-clotting defects are caused by some

clin and Thromboxane in the women's urine every one to two weeks until 12 weeks of gestation, and then once more between weeks 12 and 18.

Women who had previous miscarriages had an abnormal ratio of these two hormones, swaying the balance in favour of the blood-clotting side, said Ylikorkkala.

Nine women who aborted again had the most marked abnormality, he added. Even those with a history of abortions, and compared them to 16 pregnant women who never had a miscarriage.

They measured Prostacy-

Experts recommend low-fat, low-cholesterol diet for kids

By Nancy Benac
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The government Monday for the first time recommended that children join adults in following a

low-fat, low-cholesterol diet, saying it could reduce their risk of heart disease later in life.

"This is the major cause of death in adults in this country and we should not miss the

opportunity to prevent the disease from beginning in children," said Dr. Ronald Lauer, chairman of the expert panel that drafted the recommendations.

The guidelines for youngsters are the same as those already recommended for adults. They call for limiting saturated fatty acids to 10 per cent of calories, limiting fat intake to no more than 30 per cent of calories and holding cholesterol to 300 milligrams a day.

The panel also recom-

mended that children from families with a history of premature heart disease or high cholesterol have their blood cholesterol levels tested.

That would result in testing about 25 per cent of children and adolescents, or about 14 million youngsters. About half of those tested would need follow-up attention, mainly through special diets, the panel said.

It acknowledged that getting youngsters to eat right can be tough but said that if parents, schools, restaurants

and others provide healthy options for children it will be easier for kids to latch on to good foods.

And no one even suggested that ice cream and hot dogs be put totally off limits.

The message of this report ... is a message of moderation. It is not a message of 'never eat certain foods,'" said Dr. James Cleeman, coordinator of the National Cholesterol Education Programme. "It's a matter of making the entire eating pattern a sound one."

Weekend Crossword

LIVING DANGEROUSLY
By Dorothy B. Martin

ACROSS
1 Mel of baseball fame
2 Disney or
3 Makes lace
4 Hanes
13 "Yes ..." (David)
17 Ned
18 First appearance in a movie
20 Inventor Howe
21 Not any
22 "I'm really..."
24 Pays with fire
26 Breathed
27 Singer Jules
28 "Lion" or Nero
30 Legume
31 "—Sulbs"
32 Unstable add.
33 Uncouth
35 Funny

37 Track meet entrant
42 Vexed
43 Drowsy
45 "Stoic, Who ..." (Robert Burns)
46 Clumsy craft
47 "Papa" role
48 Liberine
49 Swiss city on the Aare
50 Space name
51 Risk everything
55 Instruments for Cassell
56 Lemongrass
59 Originated
60 City of Light
61 "Hail" (Spartacus)
62 Promote
63 Small monkey

64 What else provides
65 Alliance acronym
67 More rational
68 Decline
70 In a state of run
71 " — Restaurant" (Gothic)
72 Party Holiday TV role
74 — Brinker
75 — a song go on
76 Suits to —
77 Surgeon
78 Rainbow
79 "Wanderer" forecast
80 Figure of speech
81 Heat
82 Hail
83 Having chances
84 Charge

85 Family circle
86 " —" (Swindler)
87 Blunder
88 Hand
89 Margarine
10 Edges
11 Air-conditioned man
12 Fast jet
13 "From pastures deep ..." (E.B. White)
14 Chesterfield
15 Before, pref.
16 —dwell
17 Youngsters
18 Corn weight

23 Small short
25 " —" (Spartacus)
26 " —" (Spartacus)
28 Diva's number
31 Human name
32 " —" (Spartacus)
33 Geometric ins.
34 Blunder
35 Hand
36 Cooks
37 Viper
38 " —" (Spartacus)
39 " —" (Spartacus)
40 " —" (Spartacus)
41 " —" (Spartacus)
42 Draft status
43 Cupid
44 Oceans
45 " —" (Spartacus)
46 Commission
47 Wooden bench
48 Flying prefix
49 Wooden bench
50 " —" (Spartacus)
51 " —" (Spartacus)
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53 " —" (Spartacus)
54 " —" (Spartacus)
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56 Haven
57 Used a swizzle stick
58 Party for men
59 Awareness of one's position
60 " —" (Spartacus)
61 " —" (Spartacus)
62 " —" (Spartacus)
63 Microbe

64 Kind of star
65 Ocean
66 " —" (Spartacus)
67 Awareness of one's position
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Queen gives orphans presents on Eid Al Fitr

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein celebrated 'Eid Al Fitr feast with the orphaned children at Ruseifa, north of here, and with children of the SOS Children's Village, at Tareq, west of Amman.

The Queen, accompanied by Her Royal Highness Princess Alia Al Faisal, distributed gifts on the occasion to 178 orphaned children at the Ruseifa Islamic Charitable Society centre. The gifts included toys, clothes and other items.

Parliament deputy from the Ruseifa constituency Mohammad Al Hajj delivered a speech before the Queen paying her tribute for the care and concern for the children of Jordan, and expressing appreciation for her sharing the feast's celebrations with the

Zarqa governor and local officials as well as Ruseifa mayor were present at the celebration.



His Majesty King Hussein Monday is accompanied to King Abdullah Ibn Al Hussein Mosque where he performs Eid Al Fitr prayers (Petra photo)

Jordan celebrates Eid Al Fitr

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan, along with the Arab and Muslim world, celebrated Eid Al Fitr feast Monday with religious ceremonies held at mosques and popular celebrations in various government schools.

At Tareq, each of the foster mothers is responsible for up to nine children, giving them family-like life within the village of 12 households.

The Queen, who laid the foundation stone for a new SOS village in Aqaba in 1989, is expected to inaugurate the completed project by the middle of this year.

His Majesty King Hussein attended prayers with worshippers at the King Abdullah Ibn Al Hussein Mosque in Abdali and listened to the sermon delivered by Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Ibrahim Kilani.

Attending the prayers with the King were His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, other Royal family members, Prime Minister Mudar Badran, speakers of the upper and lower houses of Parliament, senior government

officials and high ranking army officers.

When the King arrived at the mosque the national anthem was played and a 21-gun salute was

rendered by the 21-gun salute.

Following the prayers at the mosque the King visited the tombs of the late King Abdullah, founder of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the late King Talal where he laid wreaths and recited verses of the holy Koran.

The tombs were visited by Crown Prince Hassan, other Royal princes and government officials.

On the occasion of Eid Al Fitr, King Hussein held a reception at Raghada Palace where he exchanged greetings with senior

government officials, high ranking army officers and prominent public figures.

The well-wishers included Cabinet ministers, heads of government departments, heads of regional and international organisations, honorary consuls, ambassadors, religious leaders, heads of professional unions and chambers of commerce and industry, mayors, journalists, heads of tribal clans, the speaker of the Palestine National Council and the commander of the Palestine Liberation Army in Jordan.

On the occasion of Eid Al Fitr, King Hussein exchanged greetings with heads of Arab, Islamic and friendly nations.



Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein, accompanied by Her Royal Highness Princess Alia Al Faisal, distributes gifts to the children of the SOS village on the occasion of Eid Al Fitr (Petra photo)

CSCC to open new branches

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Civil Service Consumer Corporation (CSCC) plans to open seven new branches in the Kingdom from now and until the end of 1991, to raise the total number of its branches to 30, and will strive to keep these branches stocked with commodities which are in constant demand by the consumers, according to Mohammad Al Abdulla, the CSCC director general.

He said in a statement to the Al Ra'i and the Jordan Times that the sales at the CSCC branches during 1991 were expected to reach JD 24 million, up from JD 20.5 million during 1990, and the revenues would cover salaries of employees, goods, rent, transport expenses and others.

"We have adopted a plan to ensure that the beneficiaries will have the best goods and at competitive prices, with profits not exceeding 10 per cent," Mr. Abdulla said.

"The plan entails keeping the CSCC branches stocked with

sufficient goods which are in demand by the public, so that the beneficiaries would not be forced to pay extra prices elsewhere," Mr. Abdulla added.

He said that the plan entailed purchasing 70 per cent of its goods from the local markets with the aim of supporting the national industry.

"The CSCC aims at spreading out to remote regions and benefit most beneficiaries; for this reason its 1991 budget included an allocation of JD 70,000, to open seven new branches, at Mari Al Hamam, Huson, South Shuneh, Sabah, Ruseifa, Fuheis and one in western Amman, in addition to JD 23,000 for renting proper warehouses for storing various goods," Mr. Abdulla said.

He noted that the CSCC would soon install a computer, at the cost of JD 100,000, to facilitate its operations. The CSCC, which is affiliated to the Ministry of Supply and Benefits government employees and their families, operates with a JD 10 million capital.

ICRC sends relief aid to Iraq

AMMAN (J.T.) — The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) announced Wednesday that it had dispatched its 14th convoy of relief supplies to Iraq.

An ICRC statement said the 14 vehicles, which left at noon Wednesday, carried 50 tonnes of aluminium sulfate for water purification, 41.5 tonnes of bedsheets for various hospitals in the country, 1.5 tonnes of stretchers, 1.5 tonnes of first aid kits, and 0.75 tonnes of plastic crates for water-bags deliveries as well as 200

kilogrammes of various medicines and office equipment.

In addition, eight national societies personnel, two sanitation engineers, a nurse and other sanitation specialists will join the approximately 80 ICRC delegates, physicians, nurses, logisticians, administrators, sanitation engineers and technicians already working in Baghdad and other Iraqi cities.

As usual, the statement said, the convoy departed from the ICRC warehouses in Amman.

U.N. delegation, Iraqis discuss setting up demilitarised zone

From Serene Halasa

in Iraq

BAGHDAD — United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission (UNIKOM) delegates are currently visiting Iraq to discuss arrangements with the Iraqi government concerning the establishment of a 240 kilometres demilitarised zone along the Iraqi-Kuwait border.

The establishment of the demilitarised zone came into effect following Iraq's formal acceptance of the United Nations ceasefire Resolution 678 last week.

According to the spokesman of the mission, Dr. Joachim Hutter, the mission's main task will be to observe and monitor the zone stretching five kilometres into Kuwait and ten kilometres into Iraq, including the Khor Abdullah Channel.

UNIKOM will also set up fixed posts in the zone to "deter any violations," and "to observe any hostile or potentially hostile actions," in the demilitarised zone, Dr. Hutter said.

UNIKOM delegates are expected to meet soon with Iraqi officials from the Ministry of Defence, and the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs.

The zone, which was based on the 1963 Iraqi-Kuwaiti border agreement, will only serve as a demilitarised zone composed of 300 unarmed military observers headed by General Gunther Greindl of Austria.

The mission will also include 680 infantry units, and 1,400 support staff, including transport units, communications units, supply and medical units. The mission will also have a number of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft to help it monitor the zone.

In regard to the infantry units, brought in from other demilitarised zones in the region, mainly Syria, Lebanon and Cyprus, Dr. Hutter said that the units were going to be temporarily deployed. "The Security Council asked the secretary general to keep it informed and to report in four weeks' time on whether the infantry units are still needed," he said.

"We will not be an occupying force, but an observation mission," Dr. Hutter said. "We will report to the Security Council every six months," he added.

Hammadi

(Continued from page 1)

ing an emergency, and should by all means be returned."

Dr. Hammadi, appointed last month to head a post-war cabinet, said Iraq was planning to introduce democratic reforms which would open the way for political pluralism and freedom of press.

Dr. Hammadi did not say when his government planned to implement the proposed reforms.

Camps

(Continued from page 1)

like wheat, rice, cheese, milk and other basic necessities" (see page 2).

"The situation with regard to food and basic humanitarian needs in Iraq is currently critical and exceeds the resources available to the Iraqi government and to international humanitarian organisations," he said Tuesday in a letter to the Security Council's Sanctions Committee.

The committee planned to meet Friday.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar said in Paris that if foreign troops are sent into Iraq, the plan would have to be approved by both Iraq and the Security Council.

"Otherwise, if they are countries which do not require the United Nations flag, that is completely different," Mr. Perez de Cuellar said.

He said his envoys were in touch with Iraqi officials concerning the allied plan. "We are studying the situation with much attention so the sovereignty of Iraq can be respected," Mr. Perez de Cuellar said.

On Wednesday, the International Red Cross said Turkish policy is preventing emergency aid from reaching many Kurdish refugees. Officials of the League

of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, returning from a visit to the largest refugee site in Turkey at Isikveren, said 175,000 Kurds there are living in inhuman, animal-like conditions and face a danger of epidemics.

They greeted with relief the U.S. plan.

"We welcome it. It is very positive," Foreign Ministry spokesman Murat Sungur said of the Bush proposal.

President Bush also said Wednesday he might allow Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to "escape" to another country if he gave up power in Baghdad.

Mr. Bush said he did not usually disagree with his wife, Barbara, who told reporters on Monday that she hoped President Saddam would be put on trial for "war crimes" and then hanged if found guilty.

However, the president said "the most important thing ... is to get Saddam Hussein out of there." If offered a chance for a deal that would allow the Iraqi president "to live a happy life forever more in some third country, with all kinds of conditions never to have to go back brutalise his people again, I'd have to think about it," he said.

"I might be willing to say, so far as our pressing charges, we'd be willing to get him out," Bush said.

He said his envoys were in touch with Iraqi officials concerning the allied plan. "We are studying the situation with much attention so the sovereignty of Iraq can be respected," Mr. Perez de Cuellar said.

"We are willing to help with some humanitarian aid, but we want to get rid of them," Mr. Shaheen said of more than 40,000 displaced people in southern Iraq and 6,000 mostly Iraqi refugees in northern Kuwait.

He said Iraq has sent a letter to the United Nations pledging the

return of Kuwaiti dinar bank notes totalling \$600 million, and gold and silver commemorative coins valued at just over \$1 million. Iraq also has promised to give back 3,216 standard gold bars worth \$62 million at the current gold price of \$361 an ounce.

Iraq has agreed to a United Nations resolution making it liable to pay compensation for all human, property and environmental damage caused by its seven-month occupation of Kuwait. The emirate has estimated its losses at tens of billions of dollars.

President George Bush said meanwhile he hopes the rapid withdrawal of U.S. forces in the Gulf will allay Iranian fears about American designs on the region and may even lead to better U.S.-Iran relations.

Mr. Bush acknowledged at a news conference Tuesday that Iranian misrule was part of the reason the U.S. government was unable to provide direct aid to nearly a million Kurdish refugees who have fled to Iran from Iraq.

Mr. Bush said he hoped that fear would be allayed — "and I think it will" — now that a large number of U.S. forces have returned to the United States, and are being rapidly removed.

After that, his schedule is open-ended. This could mean Mr. Baker is prepared to stay in the region if he thinks he can build further momentum towards a peace conference.

"The schedule is open to change," said Richard Boucher, a State Department spokesman. He declined to say whether Mr. Baker might remain in the area for "shuttle diplomacy" among the various countries.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

King congratulates Syria

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein sent a cable of good wishes to Syrian President Hafez Al Assad on the anniversary of the evacuation of the French forces from Syrian territory. The King wished the president continued health and happiness and the Syrian people further progress and prosperity.

King congratulates Zimbabwe

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein sent a cable of good wishes to President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe on his country's national day. The King wished the president continued progress for his country.

Bridges to remain closed today

AMMAN (J.T.) — The King Hussein and Prince Mohammad bridges across the River Jordan will remain closed Thursday for all traffic, according to a statement by the Public Security Department (PSD). The statement, which gave no reason for the closure, said that the bridges would reopen Friday, April 19, but only 50 travellers would be allowed to cross on either bridge.

Ambassador says Tokyo understands Kingdom's position

Japan: Jordan's security, stability pivotal to region

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A firm conviction that Jordan's security and stability is pivotal for the entire Middle East region and appreciation for the Kingdom's policies towards regional and international issues are behind continued Japanese assistance to the Kingdom, according to the Japanese ambassador in Amman.

Tokyo also does not share the U.S. Administration's argument that Jordan "supported" Iraq during the Gulf crisis and the war that ensued since Japan understood the intricacies of the Jordanian position, ambassador Tadayuki Nonoyama said.

"It won't be right to describe Jordan as a firm supporter of Iraq," said the ambassador.

"As far as we (Japan) are concerned, we appreciate Jordan's principled position which rejected Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and (the Kingdom's) adherence to the international sanctions against Iraq," he told the Jordan Times in an interview.

According to the ambassador, the only difference in approach between Tokyo and Amman vis-a-vis the Gulf conflict was that while Jordan opposed the military option to reverse Iraq's takeover of Kuwait, Japan went along with the American-led alliance which waged war to dislodge the Iraqi army from the emirate after a seven-month occupation.

"But that difference has no bearing on the strength of our bilateral relations which have been developed over the years," he said.

"We believe that the security and stability of Jordan is crucial to peace in the Middle East," he said. "It shares the longest confrontation line with Israel and has always followed a realistic, pragmatic and moderate approach to issues of the Middle East and other parts of the world."

"Japanese assistance to Jordan comes based on these factors as well as the excellent relations we have built since diplomatic relations were



Tadayuki Nonoyama

established 17 years ago," the ambassador added.

"Without the context of the Gulf war, Mr. Nonoyama said, Japan understood the Jordanian position very well, "perhaps even better than some of the Arab countries did."

"We realised that (the Gulf crisis) was a highly emotionalised issue in Jordan, and in this vein we saw the demonstrations and protests in the streets of Amman as an expression of such popular sentiments," Mr. Nonoyama said.

According to the ambassador, the only difference in approach between Tokyo and Amman vis-a-vis the Gulf conflict was that while Jordan opposed the military option to reverse Iraq's takeover of Kuwait, Japan went along with the American-led alliance which waged war to dislodge the Iraqi army from the emirate after a seven-month occupation.

The ambassador, who signed an agreement to lend \$425 million to Jordan a few hours after U.S. President George Bush formalised the suspension of American aid to the Kingdom last week, underlined that Tokyo followed an independent policy as far as its concerns with Amman were concerned.

Japan is optimistic that efforts to resolve the Palestinian problem in the post-war era in the region would be successful and is keenly following up the process and the Jordanian approach to the issue, he said.

The ambassador indicated that there was no change in Japan's call for an independent Palestine state and for a key Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) role in the peace process.

Mr. Nonoyama said Japan was also highly appreciative of Jordan's "positive influence" in shifting the PLO to a "moderate" course towards resolving the Palestinian problem and various peace initiatives that the Kingdom pursued over the years.

The ambassador said he was looking forward to further consolidation of Japanese-Jordanian relations in various fields, but conceded that it would be some time before the Japanese private sector would invest in the Kingdom.

"I am afraid that there are misconceptions of the image of Jordan in a region of conflict, and Japanese businessmen are very cautious at this time," he said. At the same time, he added, the focus on Jordan as a key point for media coverage of the Gulf crisis has also contributed to increase Japanese awareness of the country.

This awareness, he said, could be translated into increased tourism into Jordan if intense efforts were exerted to pick up where the flow was left off immediately after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August.

About 8,000 Japanese visited Jordan during the first six months of 1990, and the figure could have gone up to

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Time running out

IN HIS address to Congress after his triumph in the Gulf, President Bush spoke of the need for a comprehensive Arab-Israel peace grounded in the U.N. Security Council's Resolutions 242 and 338 and the principle of exchanging territory for peace. The resulting compromise, said the president, "must provide for Israel's security and recognition, and at the same time for legitimate Palestinian political rights. Anything else would fall short of fairness and security."

The words were well chosen. If they had been spoken earlier, in response, for instance, to the PLO's offer of just such a compromise in November 1988, there would have been a different Middle East today. But they have been spoken now; and the burning question which both Arabs and Israelis are asking is: did Mr. Bush mean what he said? Among the Palestinians living under Israeli rule there is scepticism tinged with hope. For the Israelis, as one of them put it in The Independent, the president's comments, coming on the eve of the visit to Israel by Secretary of State James Baker, "...deepened the anxiety in government circles that the U.S. intends to show the same determination in resolving the future of the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip as it did in ending the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait.

Is this likely? On the face of it, given the past record of the United States in supporting Israel and protecting it when necessary against the decisions of the United Nations, the answer has to be no. (The U.S. exercised its veto in the Security Council 18 times in defence of Israel while Ronald Reagan was in the White House and four times during the first two years of George Bush's presidency.) On the other hand, the machinery for doing so is in place and available, in the shape of the very Security Council resolutions which President Bush singled out as the essential basis for any Arab-Israeli peace settlement. And Resolution 242, as everyone knows and has known ever since it was adopted unanimously by the Security Council more than 23 years ago, not only calls for an Israeli withdrawal and recognition of the sovereignty and political independence of all states in the region, but stresses as an underlying and inescapable principle "the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every state in the area can live in security."

Here, with all the authority of the international community behind it, is the recipe for that "fairness and security" of which George Bush spoke with such conviction to the assembled congressmen. Everyone can agree that it would be only fair for the Palestinians to be freed from Israeli domination and to have a homeland of their own. Everyone can see that the Israelis and their Arab neighbours — need to enjoy security. So what stands in the way of such a desirable conclusion?

The answer is that the way to peace is blocked by the government of Mr. Shamir in Israel, which has reiterated its absolute refusal to abide by the terms of Resolution 242 or even to engage in negotiations about a solution with the chosen representatives of the Palestinians.

Mr. Shamir, who is 75 years old, is not likely to change his ideas now. It would be helpful, to paraphrase what George Bush said in another context not long ago, if his fellow countrymen could hasten his retirement. For, as one of them, the author Amos Oz, recently remarked: "We don't have to love the Palestinians; we don't even have to like them. But we have to make peace with them."

This Mr. Shamir is not prepared to do. And time, from everyone's point of view, is running out — Middle East International.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i Arabic daily described Western nations' show of concern about the fate of the Kurds as hypocritical, a false pretence of care for human life at a time when they themselves exercise and continue to condone barbaric actions. While the Americans seem to forget their long wars against the hatred for the blacks; and while the French and the British pretend to forget about their own atrocities against the colonised people of the world in the 19th and 20th centuries, they continue to condone Zionist criminal actions against the Palestinian people, said the paper. These colonial powers who caused the exodus of their people from Iraq, but not one of them raises a voice of protest against the repression being exercised by their Zionist ally in Palestine, the paper continued. Indeed, these colonial nations are using the Kurds as a play to maintain their aggression on Iraq and tend to forget about the Iraqi people themselves who have been subjected to months of starvation and bombing raids and siege, the paper added. Each one of these colonial powers has left behind a trail of black history characterised with injustices and acts of aggression against other nations of the world, the paper noted. As these colonial powers rally to come to the aid of Kurds who betrayed their nation and joined the hostile powers to wreak havoc in the Arab country, they ignore the cries of women and children who continue to suffer at the hands of the Israelis in an occupied country, the paper said. The attitude of the Western powers, said the paper, does not only arouse indignation in the hearts of the Arab people but also total contempt and disgust at this manifestation of open hypocrisy.

A guest columnist in Al Ra'i Arabic daily bitterly criticises the local press in general and the columnists in the daily papers in particular for their continued, unjustified support for the Iraqi leadership without showing the least reservation. The Jordanian newspapers have been serving as the mouthpiece of the Iraqi leadership, and have denied people the right to express any slight criticism of these responsible for the great tragedy that befell the Arab Nation, Hani Saoudi says in his column.

"You can judge us in ten years and see in what age we will be at the end of this century"

Iraqis determined to become a power of another kind

By Sana Attiyeh

The writer, a Jordan Times reporter, has just returned from a three-week working visit to Iraq.

THERE ARE mixed feelings among the Iraqis concerning their future and the future of their country in the aftermath of the six-week Gulf war, but one widespread belief is that Iraq will one day become an economic power in the region... quicker when the economic sanctions are lifted.

U.N. Security Council Resolution 687, which sets the conditions for a permanent ceasefire in the Gulf, was strongly criticised by Iraqi newspapers and officials, and people felt that it was humiliating for their country: humiliating not so much because they would now be forced to destroy their heavy weapons, but because they are expected to pay reparation for war damages.

In fact, they strongly believe that the allies should pay their country for war damages in Iraq after their basic infrastructure was destroyed by the aerial bombing, which left the country lacking electricity, clean running water and gasoline.

Many people who spoke to the Jordan Times had complained that Iraq should have focused its attention on economic development, rather than spending on the military. And in the aftermath of the second Gulf war, they now insist that their leadership should concentrate its efforts on furthering the interest of Iraq and its people rather "sacrifices ourselves to fight the battles of the Arab Nation."

"Imagine where we would be now if all our resources were poured into the economic development of the country," one Iraqi businessman told the Jordan Times. "Maybe this will happen now and we can still be an important regional power, an economic one."

The government in Baghdad is now concentrating its efforts on reconstruction and rebuilding the country. When President Saddam Hussein

appointed a new cabinet last month, he told his new ministers that they had six months "to prove their efficiency" in properly carrying out their duties in reconstruction, describing the aftermath of the war as "a new phase of reconstruction and rebuilding."

Prime Minister Sa'doun Hammadi, the first prime minister who is not the president in Iraq since the Ba'ath party took power in 1968, outlined the country's policy to the people in a televised speech, in which he vowed that the state would do its utmost to rebuild what the allies and the following civil strife destroyed.

The immediate effect of the destruction of the basic infrastructure of Iraq had left some Iraqis pessimistic about the reconstruction of the country, and they say that it would take many years before Iraq would return to the way it was before the aerial bombardment.

Others, however, say that it would take no time for the country to get back on its feet, pending the lifting of the U.N.-imposed sanctions.

In a recent interview with CNN in Baghdad, Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz emphasised that if the sanctions were lifted, it would take Iraq a short period of time to recover the losses.

"If they immediately lift the sanctions and allow Iraq to function economically and financially as it normally was

before Aug. 2, Iraq can recover," Mr. Aziz said in the interview, which was also attended by the Jordan Times.

"We are a very hard-working people, we have our resources and we could use them and the human resources to recover the losses we suffered during the war," Mr. Aziz added.

Last month, there was already running water in many parts of Baghdad, and people were surprised that, in less than one month after the war, the state had managed to provide electricity to different areas of the city, although it remained rationed.

"We restored electricity and water and services in an incredibly short period of time. In other countries, maybe the population would have gone through famine and turned into beggars, which is not the situation in Baghdad," Mr. Aziz stressed.

Concerning the exceptionally clean streets of Baghdad, the deputy prime minister compared the cleanliness of the Iraqi capital to other Arab capitals, saying that soon after the bombardment of Baghdad, it still remained cleaner than others.

"After all the destruction that happened in the country and in this capital, Baghdad is more clean than Cairo. And if you ask the Egyptian authorities why their capital is in a mess, they say 'we went imposed sanctions.'

"There is talk about just having a strong professional army, similar to the Republican Guards, and relieving the conscript reservists," an official said.

Another official said that the troops would now be working in the agricultural sector and in the fields to work towards agricultural development.

"But now Germany is better off than the victors, because the German people survived," Mr. Aziz said. "And in this conflict, the Iraqi people survived. You can judge us after ten years and see what age we will be at the end of this century."

lifted and Iraq can start exporting its oil, income would start flowing in, the immediate problems would be solved in no time," the analyst said. He referred to Iraq's quick infrastructural development during the past ten years, saying that the country had been able to create a modern state in a short period of time when much of the resources were also pouring into military development.

The analyst, like many Iraqis, believes that Iraq would be excused from paying large amounts for reparations for war damages, and somehow be relieved of that responsibility.

"When the money starts going into productive and progressive industry, expect an economic boom," he said, adding that Prime Minister Hammadi's vow of more freedom and rights to the private sector would escalate the economic development.

When Mr. Aziz was asked if Iraq had been sent back 50 years from the war destruction, he referred to the state in Germany soon after the end of World War II, saying it was "completely destroyed and sent back 300 years."

"But now Germany is better off than the victors, because the German people survived,"

Mr. Aziz said. "And in this conflict, the Iraqi people survived. You can judge us after ten years and see what age we will be at the end of this century."

After the 'iron lady', Britain ponders Major

By Anne Senior

Reuter

LONDON — In his four months as British prime minister, John Major has achieved one thing the formidable "iron lady," Margaret Thatcher, failed to do in 11 years.

He won the personal affection of the British public as a caring, listening politician and during the Gulf war was acclaimed in opinion surveys as the most popular leader since Winston Churchill.

But doubts are already setting in. Critics are asking: "Is this nice man really up to the job of governing Britain?"

Major faces an outbreak of nostalgia for the tough style of his predecessor Thatcher after attention shifted from his cool handling of Britain's role in the Gulf war to his more tentative approach to fostering domestic problems and the recession.

The very qualities which made Major so attractive an alternative to Thatcher — his affable nature and willingness to seek a consensus — are now being exploited as weakness by his political opponents.

The opposition Labour Party has mounted a campaign of char-

acter attacks portraying Major as an indecisive intellectual lightweight who is unfit for such high office.

Gordon Brown, Labour's sharp-tongued trade and industry spokesman, called him a "man of straw."

Major, at 48 the youngest prime minister for nearly a century, stepped into the post last November when the ruling Conservative Party rose up against Thatcher, fearing she was alienating the country with her iron-willed rule.

Commentators say the task Major inherited would stretch any politician to the limit, but he must cure his image problems if he is to be sure of staying in office after the next election.

Major has up to 16 months to get his act together before he is forced to call an election, although many believe he will try to hold the poll before that, possibly as early as June.

To handle his party's campaign he has brought in the Saatchi and Saatchi Advertising Company which helped Thatcher win three consecutive terms in office.

But Major has resisted suggestions that marketing experts should work on him directly to

spruce up his rather bland image as a grey man in a grey suit.

"There is no future in being halfway to Mrs. Thatcher," said Patrick Dunleavy, professor of government at the London School of Economics. "He needs to toughen up as a person but soften out in terms of policy — it's a very hard proposition."

Major is tipped for distinction if he rides out the problems of redressing his party.

If you compare Major with previous Tory (conservative) leaders he's very similar to Stanley Baldwin, who was one of the

most successful conservative premiers," Dunleavy said.

Baldwin, who also presented himself as a modest, unsophisticated man, served three terms as prime minister earlier this century and won a reputation for political acumen.

To begin its charges of ineptitude, Labour points to political stumbling by Major over sensitive issues such as education and the widely-hated poll tax, brought in by Thatcher's government to fund local services.

In a television interview, Major dismissed academic qualifications

as insignificant at a time when his party is trying to introduce a controversial new scheme to submit young children to national aptitude tests.

Major, who left school at 16 but got a degree by correspondence course, embarrassed his supporters by saying in an interview he couldn't remember how many passes he had gained at "O-level" — the basic school qualification for 16-year-olds.

Latest opinion polls show the early rush of support for Major, which peaked during the Gulf war, has been eroded by new scepticism about his policies and his party has lost the clear lead it had opened up over Labour.

Major kept the lid on Conservative Party dissent during the war. But his decision to scrap the poll tax, the flagship reform of Thatcher's last term, and opt for prolonged consultation on how to replace it had some right-wingers balking after the certainties of Thatcher rule.

Thatcher may never have been loved by the people, even at the height of her political fortunes, but was always respected by a nation which traditionally admires strong stewardship such as Churchill displayed in World

War II.

"With Margaret Thatcher as party leader there was never any doubt in which direction the Conservatives were headed ... with John Major in charge we are not so sure," said young Conservative Chairman Murdo Fraser in a recent speech.

The fact that Major appeared to be stung into action about the plight of Kurdish refugees fleeing Iraq after Thatcher spoke up on the issue has also invited unfavourable comparisons.

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UEFA expected to welcome Liverpool back to Europe

LONDON (R) — The nightmare of the Heysel Stadium tragedy is likely to be laid to rest for Liverpool this week after a six-year exile from European club soccer.

"I strongly believe Liverpool's isolation will be ended and they will be pardoned," European Football Union (UEFA) President Lennart Johansson said in an interview in Zurich last month.

The return of Liverpool, the northern club who have dominated English soccer for the past 30 years, will be the most anxiously awaited item on the agenda at the UEFA Executive Committee meeting which begins in a London hotel Thursday.

The official announcement is not likely until Friday morning due to the number of other items to be discussed. "I wouldn't think the actual

decision will take more than five minutes," said English Football Association (F.A.) Chairman Bert Millichip. "I think people's minds are already made up."

"I am reasonably confident they will return."

English clubs were banned from Europe in 1985 after 39 fans died in rioting in the Brussels stadium just before the European Cup final between Juventus and holders Liverpool.

The ban on English clubs was lifted last year but Liverpool's exile was set to continue for another three seasons.

Johansson now feels Liverpool have suffered enough.

"We must remember that Liverpool did not try to defend themselves, fully accepted their punishment, have done the utmost to help and that we have not received any reports of trou-

ble since," he said in a recent British newspaper interview.

If they are readmitted, Liverpool would be likely to represent England in the UEFA Cup next season since they are now second in the first division, five points adrift of Arsenal.

The UEFA committee will also discuss modifications to the European Cup, a new agreement with the European Community governing the freedom of movement of players, and the status of former East German clubs.

The most controversial issue concerns the European Cup, the continent's top club competition, which would adopt a new league format from the quarter-final stages from next season.

UEFA's Club Competition Committee has already agreed to changes on a trial basis but some clubs are opposed to the move

even though it would bring in more money from television.

Uli Hoeneß, manager of German champions Bayern Munich, protested last week that the format would wreck the competition by robbing it of the excitement found in knockout games.

But Millichip said the F.A. was generally in favour of a change in the format which should prevent Europe's leading clubs "from making an early exit and devaluing the final."

The agreement on players is expected to allow every professional club in the European Community from the start of next year to use three foreign players plus two non-nationals who have lived at least five years in the country.

At present, European Community countries have a variety of restrictions governing non-nationals.

Barcelona 5 points clear at the top

keeper Abel Resinas.

Atletico came back in the second half, especially after Juan Sabas replaced Toni Munoz, and it was Sabas who laid on a 71st minute pass for Austrian striker Gerhard Rodax to equalise.

In a tense duel, in which Seville were hoping for a good result to help secure a place in the UEFA Cup, referee Gonzalez Panadero showed seven yellow cards to Atletico Madrid, and sent off libero Juanito Rodriguez and Sabas.

One yellow card was for Yugoslav coach Tomislav Ivic, after he protested over Juanito's expulsion. Ivic had some compensation in that he broke the existing record for longevity of the eight Atletico coaches so far appointed by Chairman Jesus Gil in four seasons.

Seville went ahead after 47 minutes when Austrian striker Anton Polster centred for Ramon Vazquez to steer the ball past

keeper Michael Landrup.

Dutch defender Ronald Koeman made no mistake from the spot.

Barcelona were without Kristo Stoichkov, Jose Vakero, Aitor Beguiristain, Y Jose Alessanco, all injured, and Nando Munoz was under suspension.

The Catalans' only rivals for the championship, Atletico Madrid, virtually said goodbye to their hopes after drawing with an inspired Seville Saturday.

Playing without suspended midfield general Bernd Schuster, the Madrid team extended their unbeaten run to 18 matches but were unable to create many goal opportunities.

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Gorbachev makes bluntest public appeal for aid in Tokyo speech

TOKYO (AP) — Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev made his bluntest public appeal yet for foreign aid when he told Japan's parliament Wednesday he needs the help of advanced countries to prevent his nation from falling apart.

Gorbachev, the first Soviet leader to visit Japan, also vowed his nation will never attack Japan but said he should not be held responsible for the actions of previous generations — a veiled reference to the Soviet Union's seizure of four islands off northern Japan in the closing days of World War II.

Japan demands the return of the four islands before it is prepared to provide the Soviets with the massive infusion of aid and investment the crumbling Soviet economy needs. The two nations have no peace treaty ending the war.

The islands, just a few kilometres off northern Japan, are one of the prime issues on the agenda of the four-day summit, which began Tuesday. Gorbachev and Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu held a third session Wednesday, then added an extra meeting to continue talks on the territorial dispute. However, there was no sign of imminent breakthrough.

Gorbachev also said in his speech that further military reductions are being made in the Soviet Far East. He proposed a regional security conference between the United States, Japan and the Soviet Union.



Mikhail Gorbachev

sions, and his rival, Russian President Boris Yeltsin, has warned that no deal can be made on the Kuril Islands without the Russian Republic's approval.

But without concessions, Gorbachev's appeals Wednesday to Japanese businessmen to invest in his country appeared unlikely to bear much fruit.

"Our Far East and Siberia have resources, but they lack the infrastructure to develop them," Gorbachev told hundreds of Japan's business elders at a luncheon meeting. "I appeal to Japanese companies to consider helping develop the region."

He also appealed for Japanese aid in developing Soviet Far Eastern ports, airports, railroads, highways and communications.

On Tuesday, an invitation from Gorbachev for Kaifu to visit Moscow was immediately accepted.

Gorbachev himself acknowledged that the economic "situa-

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If we don't halt the disintegration of the state — of the economy, the law, and relations between republics — (then) the country could fall into the chaos that gives birth to dictatorship," Gorbachev said in his speech before the Diet, or parliament.

"Despair and hopelessness are a serious threat to the progress of civilisation. Therefore, advanced countries help themselves by helping others," he added.

Gorbachev was given standing ovations at the beginning and end of the 45-minute afternoon speech, which was interrupted seven times by applause.

After the last of the three originally scheduled summit meetings ended Wednesday evening, the Foreign Ministry announced the leaders would meet once more Thursday for further discussions about the islands.

Both sides agreed not to disclose any details of the two-hour meeting, in which each leader was accompanied by only one aide and one interpreter.

Soviet spokesman Vitaly Ignatenko described the talks as "a profound and serious exchange and at times it was sharp." The public Japan Broadcasting Corp. reported that no new proposals were made by either side.

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